THE SECOND COMING OF OUR LORD

J. H. LOWE

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REVISED NOTES OF BIBLE READINGS.

BY

J. H. LOWE.

CLOTH ONE SHILLING; STIFF PAPER, NINEPENCE.

SECOND EDITION—REVISED.

LONDON:
"CHRISTIAN HERALD" OFFICE, 6, TUDOR STREET
NEW BRIDGE STREET, E.C.
1907.

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PREFACE.

This little book is published at the request of many friends who have expressed a desire for notes of Bible Readings, which have been given at various times, on this most important subject of the Return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So much has been written on this subject, that the necessity for another book may well be called in question; but there is increasing urgency for bringing to remembrance truths which are well known (2 Pet. i. 12, 13, 15), and so much the more as we see the Day approaching.

May the coming Lord graciously deign to use this volume for His own glory, and grant it may serve to lead those who know Him as their Saviour into a still deeper sense of His great love, that will quicken their love for Him into still more earnest longing to see His face. Also, may it yet again warn the careless of the ancient but still unfulfilled prophecies of the certain judgment of this world, seeing that heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's Word shall stand for ever; and the Scriptures must be fulfilled, whether for sorrow or for gladness, whether for death or life.

J. H. LOWE.

The Second Coming of Our Lord.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION. (1 THESS. I.)

COMING AS JUDGE. COMING AS KING.

HE First Epistle to the Thessalonians is one of the earliest of the New Testament writings. It is believed to have been written in the year A.D. 54. Only the year before, Paul, Silas, and Timotheus had visited Thessalonica, on their first mission to Greece, and preached there three Sabbath days (Acts xvii. 2). As a result, some Jews believed, and a great multitude of Greek idolaters turned to God.

The Epistle, therefore, is addressed to a church composed almost entirely of young converts, and the features of their Christian life are thus described: they had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." The word of the Gospel that leads to this had been preached to them, in the power of the Holy Ghost, by men whose lives witnessed its truth: the Thessalonians received that word with the Holy Spirit's joy in their hearts. The word

wrought so effectually in them (ii. 13), that, following the example of the preachers, they followed Christ in spirit (i. 6), and at once became themselves examples to all believers in the surrounding countries, and within two years their church had become a centre from which the Gospel was again radiating to regions beyond (i. 8).

This stands in Scripture record as a sample of true Christian life and progress, developed in very young converts: the work of the Holy Spirit in a nation of idolaters, by a presentation of the Gospel in power, and, as far as is recorded, only three times, in a three weeks' mission.

The effect is that souls are converted, to serve God and to wait for Christ. The 9th verse declares that this result is sufficient evidence of the character of the Gospel that was preached. It is evident, then, that with the first note of the Gospel of grace and salvation was preached the second coming of the Lord Jesus, for whom the converts were to wait.

The Gospel, therefore, presents Christ, and Him crucified, dead, buried, risen again (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4), and coming again (1 Thess. i.).

This chapter also sets forth the turning to God from idols as a "work of faith" (ver. 3), serving the living and true God as a "labour of love," and waiting for God's Son as the "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father."

It shows that the truth of Christ's coming is not

reserved for advanced Christians, but is to be proclaimed to the world as widely as the Gospel itself.

This Gospel is as much needed to-day in England as it was in Greece in A.D. 53. Conversion must be a turning to God from idols. We do not see men prostrating themselves in our streets before painted stone blocks or hideous idols hewn in wood, but the "covetousness, which is idolatry," is just as rife (Col. iii. 5). Covetousness is self-worship, displacing the worship of the living and true God, and therefore is idolatry in its essential principle, and an abomination unto the Lord. Service immediately follows conversion, because the grace that has delivered from the bond-service of Satan creates the gratitude that longs to enter the service of the Saviour-God; and its activity is a labour of love—a love that has been begotten of His love first to us (1 John iv. 19). Then comes the waiting, to see Him whom unseen we have learned to love—waiting to see that face, once so marred for us, now so glorious; and spiritual vision, opened by the indwelling Spirit, can even now behold Him in faith and in spirit, revealing the glory of the Father to the soul. But He shall yet be seen in full outshining, showing forth the fulness of His love, His joy, His beauty, and His glory. Lord Jesus, we wait for Thee! Even so must we listen to the warning, "Let us not sleep; . . . let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. v. 6). And we have slept! But "now it is high time to awake out of sleep" (Rom. xiii. 11)

Waiting even for a dearly-loved friend, waiting long and late, induces sleepiness against our will. To be occupied with something to please the expected one is the best provision for keeping awake. So the serving helps the waiting; and nothing like the love of God and patient waiting for Christ (2 Thess. iii. 5) will sanctify and control the service till He come (Luke xix. 13, R.V.). In 1 Thess. i., we see the work of faith is the outcome of life; serving is seen in sounding out again the Word of the Lord—the Gospel truly received, and then lovingly dispensed, far and wide; waiting for God's Son is the deep response of a heart filled with His love.

TITLES OF THE COMING ONE.

The Scriptures testify of Jesus (John v. 39). The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. xix. 10). Hence, in searching the prophecies of His coming, it is important to note the character, or the title, under which the coming One is presented, because with this will accord the scene foretold, the circumstances described, and the class of persons principally affected by it.

There are four principal characters in which the Lord Jesus is presented as the One who is Coming:—

1. As the Judge of all the earth (Gen. xviii. 25).
2. As the King over all the earth (Zech. xiv. 9).
3. As the Lord and Master (John xiii. 14).
4. As the Bridegroom (John iii. 29).

The first prophecy recorded in the Bible relates

to the Son of God; it was given by God Himself to Satan in Eden (Gen. iii. 15). It foretells His first coming to this earth, as the woman's Seed, whose heel should be bruised at Calvary, but who should then and there bruise Satan's head with a bruise from which he will never recover. The second recorded prophecy also relates to the Son of God; it was given through Enoch of the seventh generation from Adam; it foretells His second coming to this earth with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon the ungodly (Jude 14).

The first declaration that God has given us concerning the Second Coming of His Son is this prophecy of Enoch, which we read in Jude, but which we are told was proclaimed by him during his sojourn on earth. Nearly a thousand years before the Flood—perhaps in the seventh century from the creation, and during the lifetime of the first man—was this first great prophecy sent out.

In the dim ages of the past, while sin was but beginning its dreadful reign unto death, God gave warning to all men then living—a warning to be maintained through all time,—that "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all . . . the ungodly." He will convince their thoughts, judge their deeds and their rebellious words.

And this ancient prophecy is awaiting its fulfilment still.

Why should God give this first place to the

prophecy of a Coming Judge? There *must be a judgment* of sin, because God is righteous and holy. There is a *warning* given of coming judgment, because God is love, and is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). And so the warning of coming judgment goes out to all men, through all time—the first, greatest, widest prophecy—a trumpet-note to be ever resounding round and round the whole earth: "Behold, the Lord cometh . . . to execute judgment upon all the ungodly." And God sends forth the warning with the one object that men may repent, and seek and find mercy. Enoch, the man that walked with God and pleased Him, was God's witness in the earth in his day to maintain the warning of the prophecy.

In the days of Abraham we read the title of

"THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH"

(Gen. xviii. 25). Other prophecies follow, in days of Job, about the time of Moses, David's, Solomon's, and the testimonies of the prophets.

Job foresees his Redeemer standing upon the earth (Job xix. 25), and destruction to the wicked (xxxi. 3). Psalm xcvi. 13 foretells the same Coming to Judgment: "The Lord cometh to judge the earth; He shall judge the world in righteousness."

This tells that the judgment will be universal, comprehending the earth in its entirety; and a judgment, under a sceptre of righteousness, will be brought to bear upon living men on this earth.

Isaiah xiii. 9-14. This is a great, far-reaching prophecy of the coming day of the Lord, cruel "with wrath and fierce anger," to punish the world for its evil. It foretells that great and terrible day when the sun shall be darkened, and moon and stars shall cease their shining. The heavens shall be shaken and the earth removed.

Here is the first announcement of the terrific convulsions among the heavenly bodies which are several times referred to in later prophecies—Ezek. xxxii. 7; Joel ii. 10, 31; iii. 15; Acts ii. 19, 20.

These descriptions invariably refer to the great and terrible judgment that the Lord Jesus will execute at His personal descent to the earth, according to Enoch's original word, in the day of wrath of the Lord of Hosts.

In the midst of these awful scenes stands out the Man more precious than all the earth ever knew of preciousness. All the sin that is judged has grown out of the first man's first sin (Rom. v. 12); and all men involved in the judgment belong to that "first man, Adam" (1 Cor. xv. 45-47). All who are saved, redeemed, and brought back to God are comprehended in that second Man, "the Lord from heaven"—this Man more precious than gold; and all who stand with Him are chosen, and are made precious in His preciousness in the sight of God (1 Pet. iii. 4).

Isaiah xxx. 25-30. The scene is again the earth, and the time when the Lord shall sift (or

divide—Matt. xxv. 32) the nations, separating the wicked from the just. His glorious voice is heard, His arm of righteous indignation falls swiftly in awful judgment on the wicked, but binds up the breach of His people, healing their wound. Mercy and judgment go hand in hand.

Isaiah lxvi. 15, 16. The Lord will come with fire, rendering rebuke with flames of fire—revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God (2 Thess. i. 7-9). He is the Lord, the King of heaven (ver. 1), having the earth for His footstool. Coming with fire, He will be seen as the lightning (Luke xvii. 24) in the day when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke xvii. 30).

Zech. xiv. This chapter gives in very full detail many particulars concerning the coming of the Lord to the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem. It is evident these varied and definite details are to be taken with literal exactness. Allied armies are described besieging Jerusalem. The city is captured, and captives cruelly treated. The Lord suddenly appears on the scene, to the immediate and utter discomfiture of the armies so lately victorious. His descent is to the mount from whence He ascended forty days after His resurrection. There will be physical convulsions; a terrible earthquake will rend the Mount of Olives. But, central event of all these coming wonders, "the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee" (Zech. xiv. 5).

LITERAL FULFILMENT.

Many times in the Gospels we read how the Scriptures were fulfilled which had foretold the first coming of our Lord to this world; and we can see with what literal exactness the fulfilment made good the prophecy. We are told, "He shall appear the second time" (Heb. ix. 28), and we are well assured that every Scripture relating to His next appearance will be fulfilled with the same literal exactitude. Wonderful as these Scriptures are, and incomprehensible to our natural minds, faith hears God's Word, and knows that all things shall be fulfilled which are written concerning Him of whom the Scriptures testify. The Scriptures must be fulfilled (Mark xiv. 49). "Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good" (Num. xxiii. 19)?

YOUR GOD WILL COME.

The Creator Himself shall again be seen on this earth, which He made for His pleasure. God Himself shall come again, as truly as once He came in lowly guise, a "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." We look back to His first coming, the Light of God, into this world of darkness, when "the darkness comprehended Him not" (John i. 5, 10). Blinded by the world-rulers of this darkness (Eph. vi. 12), the men of this world still comprehend Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not, and His people of Israel nationally reject Him still. But the prophetic word is sure. A day of promise

awaits a remnant who live on in hope; although bitterly oppressed, outraged, and reproached for His name's sake, to them is given the strengthening, uplifting assurance, "Your God will come . . . He will come and save you" (Isa. xxxv. 4). And to the world that has crucified Him, refused His claims, despised His name, scorned His Gospel, denied Him as Creator, as Sovereign, and as Redeemer, vengeance, held back for ages in longsuffering mercy, shall fall at last—a recompense proportionate to the treason-crime that takes sides with Satan against God; that said, "Not this Man, but Barabbas," and still persists in the wicked choice, spurning all offers of pardon; and chooses death rather than life. Wherefore, when He shall come according to the Scriptures, the unveiled glory of God will be found insupportable by all who have not found the shelter which His mercy is providing now; and His very presence will prove their everlasting destruction (2 Thess. i. 9).

THE JUDGE OF QUICK AND DEAD.—Acts x. 42.

In Daniel vii. we read a title only there recorded: "The Ancient of Days." The description of awful majesty is almost the same as given of the Son of Man in Rev. i. 13, etc. It is the revelation of the Judge of Quick and Dead. Verse 22 declares His coming to put an end to all hostile powers of Satan and of men. In verse 13, the same title is the prerogative of God, who gives all judgment unto the Son (John v. 22.)

So He comes as the Executor of God, Himself God manifest in manhood; by whom, and for whom, are all things.

Here, too, in Daniel vii. 13, is His title Son of Man, to whom is given the kingdom, with all its glory and dominion, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him; an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away. As Son of Man, He was despised and set at nought during His first advent, but God hath given Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man (John v. 27). Henceforward, therefore, this title is specially associated with the throne of judgment.

We read how He shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom (2 Tim. iv. 1); that the wicked shall give account to Him who is ready to execute judgment (1 Pet. iv. 5).

REPEATED WARNINGS OF JUDGMENT.

Consistent with all the warnings graciously given to urge sinners to repentance since the days of Enoch, we find the last chapter of the Old Testament (Mal. iv.) repeating and emphasising the warnings of judgment. The day is coming that shall burn as an oven, and the proud and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble. The coming of Elijah is promised, that he may at last turn many hearts to repentance, so that a part at least of the inhabitants of the earth shall escape when the Lord shall come—and the whole earth will not be smitten with the curse.

Solemn are the warning words that close the Old Testament: "Lest I come and

SMITE THE EARTH WITH A CURSE."

What that curse is, the Lord Himself defines in its terms and in its time; when the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and He shall say unto them on the left hand, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41).

With this final warning the Old Testament closes. And when the appointed centuries run out, through the preaching of Elijah and other witnesses like him, a multitude are found on the right hand of the Judge, who will be "blessed" (Matt. xxv. 34).

As we meditate on these things, what is the appeal to our hearts? God warns the world of judgment so that it may seek mercy.

Enoch stands out as first witness of God's great warning to the world; Elijah, as closing witness, just before the day breaks, when the Judge shall come to take His throne of judgment. How many men of God have maintained the witness between these two? Peter at Pentecost warned all men of that day (Acts ii. 20); immediately adding that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (ii. 21). And has not our Lord appointed all His people, of every age, in their day and measure, to be His witnesses to maintain this same warning everywhere until He comes (Acts i. 8)? And should not our hearts be in accord with the

long-suffering mercy of our God, which has saved us, and still waits to save others (2 Pet. iii. 9)?

THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY.

It has been reserved for our Lord Jesus to give the fullest details and description of the Great Day when He will judge the world in righteousness. This is recorded in His own solemn words in Matt. xxv. 31-46. Here He describes that judgment so long withheld, but which will surely come at last. The Son of Man shall come in His glory—attended by all the holy angels, as well as all the saints, as is written in Zech xiv. 5, and first foretold by Enoch (Jude 14).

HE WILL DESCEND IN POWER AND GREAT GLORY.

Zechariah tells of His descent to the Mount of Olives; our Lord describes the establishment of the throne of His glory, the gathering of all nations before Him (Matt. xxv. 32), and the separating them one from another; the righteous being placed on His right hand, and the rest on His left. He tells us beforehand the very words He will speak, which will determine the changeless destiny of these two great divisions of men. To those on the right hand He declares the kingdom was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. He bids them enter and inherit that kingdom, and He also says they are endowed with life eternal (ver. 46). These constitute the Gentile part of the population of the earthly kingdom of Christ. The other part, the people of Israel,

we are informed of in other Scriptures. Those which are set on the King's left hand are doomed to hear the awful sentence consigning them to "everlasting fire."

Our Lord had previously told His disciples (Matt. xiii. 41) how He will send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth; and "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." This, doubtless, is a further description of

THE SAME GREAT SESSION OF JUDGMENT,

and tells us that angelic powers will be employed in bringing all who offend to the left hand of the King, and after the sentence is pronounced will give effect to it by casting them into the furnace of everlasting fire.

Again, in Matt. xxiv. 31, He describes how He will send forth His angels, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other; telling us that the same angelic agency will be employed in gathering the righteous to the right hand, and afterwards restoring them to their places on earth, thenceforth under the sway of their own rightful King.

These two passages seem also to show that

THIS JUDGMENT IS UNIVERSAL,

embracing the whole population of the earth living at the time of the Lord's descent to take

His kingdom. Out of His kingdom are gathered "*all* things that offend and them that do iniquity." He will "execute judgment upon *all*" (Jude 15). As in the days Noah the flood took *all* away—the whole race of living men were in the flood or in the ark—so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be (Matt. xxiv. 39). He shall reward every man according to his works.

CONCERNING ISRAEL

and their part in the kingdom, we read that "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 26): all who survive the terrible judgments, and fires of tribulation, that will be poured upon the nation for their persistent refusal of their Messiah; some of them scattered among the nations of the earth, some of them surviving the last dreadful siege of Jerusalem (Zech. xiv. 2). These will be gathered together and will at last "look on Him whom they have pierced" (John xix. 37 and Zech. xii. 10), and in repentance and mourning will return in heart to Him. So at last the nation shall be converted, and acknowledge their rightful King, and will, together with the saved Gentiles, from the right of the judgment throne, be the happy subjects of the earthly kingdom. And all these, possessing life eternal in the earthly sphere, will no more be liable to sickness or death.

We have lately experienced some of those attempts to deceive by the saying, "Lo, here is Christ, or there." It was reported that Christ had come into some desert of the East, again

to an obscure Russian village, and yet again in some "secret chamber" in London. He told us to believe it not, for "as the lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth even to the West, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt xxiv. 23-27). "Even as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven" (Luke xvii. 24), His coming will be sudden, dazzling, and as universally known as the sunrise. There will be no secret coming, known only to a few; all will know at once that an unparalleled event has taken place, and that the day of man's pride and folly has come to its end. As Daniel prophesied, and the Lord several times repeated, all men "shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." "Every eye shall see Him . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Matt. xxiv. 29-31; xxvi. 64; Rev. i. 7).

He will come with fire, rendering rebuke with flames of fire, as in the day of Sodom (Luke xvii. 28-30). The word "revealed" used in ver. 30 signifies an unveiling. All the glory of the Almighty, previously hidden from men's eyes, shall in an instant be revealed to the consternation of all His enemies.

In the passages we have read, our Lord Jesus Christ has often been referred to by His title

THE LORD.

In foretelling His coming again, this is the title

most frequently used. There are five significations attached to this title:

(*a*) It is the full title of Deity. "The Lord my God shall come" (Zech. xiv. 5).

(*b*) It is the royal title: "The Lord shall be King over all the earth" (Zech. xiv. 9).

(*c*) He is the Lord of His servants, which implies a more personal and intimate relation—Master and Owner (Matt. xxiv. 50; xxv. 14).

(*d*) The Lord of the harvest, in whom is vested all the right, title, and interest in the results of all the work on earth, done for God (Luke x. 2).

(*e*) The Lord of the heart's affections: most intimate, nearest, and dearest relation of all. The Queen worships Him as Lord of her heart (Ps. xlv. 11). So Sarah called Abraham lord (1 Pet. iii. 6). And the Bride, led by the Spirit, responds to her Bridegroom, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20).

We have seen how Enoch was the first of God's witnesses in the earth, of the coming Day of Judgment, when the Lord shall come attended by ten thousands of His saints, to judge the ungodly.

Many times God has repeated His warnings to the world, through His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, as He says (Jer. xxv. 3, 4, etc.), and even yet the prophecy remains unfulfilled; and also, unhappily, very largely disbelieved.

We have noted, too, the prophecy that Elijah shall come again to testify for God, just before the

appearing of the Judge Himself; and the result of his testimony will be that he shall turn many to God almost at the last moment (Mal. iv. 5, 6).

He longed to turn the hearts of his people back to God. He hoped it was done at Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 37). Greatly disappointed and discouraged, he withdrew into the wilderness (1 Kings xix. 4). He never saw the hearts of the people truly converted to God. God took him suddenly to Himself, as He had taken Enoch before, and as He will take many of us some day soon.

The same Holy Spirit who endued Elijah with power for his testimony, came again upon John, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus: and John was empowered to make ready a people prepared for the Lord at His first coming (Luke i. 16, 17).

The same Spirit is coming again on the two anointed ones, that are yet to stand before the God of the whole earth. Two latest witnesses, endued with miraculous power, are yet to maintain the same testimony, and will realise the words, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zech. iv.).

God has charged us also, in our day, to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark xvi. 15), even unto the ends of the earth (Acts i. 8), until He comes (Matt. xxiv. 14). Our attitude towards the world should be like Enoch's, and sustained while we too are awaiting our translation. We should maintain a testimony like Elijah's, growing more intense as the time approaches. "Ye are the salt

of the earth" (Matt. v. 13), to stay its corruption by a faithful witness to the truth. "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14), a warning beacon, to lead lost sinners to Christ and salvation; maintaining the testimony throughout these days of longsuffering grace, because "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; and, consistently with this, "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

COMING AS KING TO REIGN.

A first hint of the coming kingdom is found in the blessing of Judah by his father Jacob (Gen. xlix. 10). "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh come." This is one of the earliest intimations of the coming of Him whose reign shall be characterised by "a sceptre of righteousness" (Ps. xlv. 6; Heb. i. 8).

In the wonderful song of salvation sung by the people of Israel on the bank of the Red Sea, on the morning of their deliverance from the Egyptian host, we find another prophetic word of the coming kingdom, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Exod. xv. 18), an inspired note of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit, from the very heart of God. Thus, little by little, He is telling out the Divine counsels and purposes which centre in the Son, His Beloved. Not only shall His reign be manifested in the wielding of a heavenly and spiritual dominion, but also in a visible and earthly dominion.

Zech. xiv.: This chapter is a great detailed prophecy of His actual coming the second time to the earth. His feet are to stand on the Mount of Olives, just eastward of Jerusalem, as literally as we know He stood there the moment before His ascension (Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 9 and 12).

By some tremendous force, very likely volcanic, but as completely under the control of the Master as were the raging winds on the Galilean Sea, the mountain range of Olivet will divide, and form a channel for the newly-created river to flow eastward to the Dead Sea, and westward to the Mediterranean. All through the drought of summer, as well as in winter, shall be sustained the perennial flow of this river of living water. The uplifting of low grounds and depression of hills will provide safe building areas for the extension of the city of the Great King. And the Lord shall be

KING OVER ALL THE EARTH.

There shall be one Lord, and His name one.

Wonderful day—a day known to the Lord; and when the evening comes, and sunset glow has ceased to shine, the earth shall still be lightened with the Light of God.

The whole chapter is replete with descriptions of natural earthly circumstances suddenly affected by the coming of the heavenly Owner to take personal possession and occupation of His empire. He will be revealed in Divine and human glory and majesty, and rule the earth as a man among

men. Numerous and beautiful are the prophecies of the days of glory in store for this earth when Jesus shall take the throne of His father David, as promised by the angel to His Virgin Mother (Luke i. 32, 33).

Isa. ix. 6, 7 : The Child has been born ; the Son has been given. He grew up the Man Christ Jesus. Accused before the Roman governor that He said He was King of Israel, He answered, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John xviii. 37).

Jewish priests and rulers conspired against Him. An unjust judge pronounced Him guiltless, yet condemned Him to death, and so He has not yet to this day ascended the throne of David.

Who will for one moment suppose that this conspiracy and crime will avail to thwart the purpose of the Father, who has said, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool"?

Meanwhile, Pilate the judge, and the dying thief, stand as two witnesses that Jesus is King (John xix. 19-22 ; Luke xxiii. 42). And when Jesus ascends the throne of David in the royal city of Zion, it will at once become the throne of the world. At an appointed signal from the throne in the heavens, the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our LORD, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. He will order and establish His kingdom with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever.

The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this. The part of the prophecy already fulfilled in the birth of the Saviour, Christ the Lord, is the sure earnest of the fulfilment of the rest of it.

And the key to all the purposes of God respecting the kingdom of His Christ can be found in these words, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands" (John iii. 35). Well may we respond in the same glorious anticipation, and with yet deeper understanding, and more earnest desire of heart, pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, even as it is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 10)!

Ps. xcvi. 9-13. "Say among the heathen, The Lord reigneth." This goes out beyond the limits of Israel—all shall fear before Him. Songs of salvation and praise arise in all the earth; among the heathen the Lord reigneth—the Lord who made the heavens is worshipped in the earth, in His sanctuary (in Zion); reigning in righteousness. The heavens rejoice in sympathy, and the earth is glad, and all the lower creation—sea, field, and forest—share the blessings of God.

Ps. xcviii. 9. In this Psalm, joy, gladness, praise, exultation, rise to higher notes and grander acclamation, for the victory and triumph over Satan make visible God's great salvation. The Victor is seen reigning, and developing the gains of His victory. The scene is earthly, and heaven is in accord, and the One who comes is our Sovereign Lord the King. Israel has special nearness

and blessing, but Gentiles have their part, even unto the ends of the earth.

Isaiah lx. 1-3. The Lord is come as the Light of Israel. The glory of the Lord is risen upon His people, and His glory shall be seen upon them. The glory of God shall be seen in that glorious form of humanity. He is the Lord thy God (ver. 19), the never-setting Sun and everlasting Light (20). Again it is the earthly scene, enlightened with the heavenly glory of the Lord the King (ver. 12), affecting those living on earth in that day.

Isaiah lxvi. 18, 19. Many shall come and see the glory of the Lord, and then go and declare what they have seen in remote parts of the earth.

Ezekiel xliii. 2, 4, etc. This most glorious prophecy foresees the Lord returning in His glory to His sanctuary on Mount Zion (Zech. ii. 10)—the glory coming from the East (Matt. xxiv. 27), the earth shining with His glory; taking possession of His throne, His house, His dwelling, in the midst of His people.

In the two series of prophecies we have been tracing—the one forewarning of the Lord's Coming to judge, the other foretelling the glories of His reign—we note the constant recurrence of His title, "THE LORD," denoting His Deity and Royalty. His glorious majesty is foreseen in the Throne of Judgment, and the blessing of His Personal Presence on earth is one of the special features of His reign.

Zech. ii. 10. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for, lo! I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." In the blessing of Israel many nations shall be joined to the Lord, and share the blessing with His other saints.

Mal. iii. 1. The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, purify the sons of Levi, and restore the ancient Aaronic priesthood. No soul-blind priests will try to withstand Him then, as they would have, if they could, the day He came to His temple the week before He died. He comes this time "the Messenger of the covenant," and finds a people that will delight in Him at last.

So, in all these Old Testament Scriptures, in all their varied detail of prophetic description, it is ever the coming of the Lord the King—coming as Sovereign Lord to take possession of His earthly dominion; judge His ungodly subjects or traitorous enemies; save and bless with a rule of righteousness His own peculiar nation of Israel; and in Him shall all kindreds of the earth be blessed, according to the promise to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 16).

It is a coming to this very earth on which we are living now. He will be seen by human eyes, such as ours are to-day, and He will be attended by a heavenly Court; and amid the radiant throng that will surround the King as He stands once again on the Mount of Olives, will surely be each one of us who to-day believe in Jesus, as

well as all who now are resting, absent from the body and present with the Lord.

We have read how the King of Israel rode into Jerusalem (John xii. 13) as the lowly Prophet of Nazareth (Matt. xxi. 5-10), and we read that He will re-enter the city, and the royal proclamation of His return is already written, "Behold your God!" (Isa. xl. 9). His arm of Divine omnipotence shall rule the earth; His hand, that holds the ocean and measures the heavens, shall yet again take a little child into His arms, and speak His blessing for eternity. (Isa. xl. 11; Mark x. 16; 1 Chron. xvii. 27.)

THE REDEEMER.

Isa. lix. 20. He comes as Redeemer. The very One who shed His blood, and died to save a race of transgressors, who redeems to God by His blood—the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. So shall every soul confess Him who is delivered from the wrath to come. For by every individual of Adam's race He shall be seen, either as Redeemer or as Judge.

OTHER TITLES OF THE COMING ONE.

The Light of Israel (Isa. lx. 1).

The Latter Rain (Hos. vi. 3).

The Messenger of the Covenant (Mal. iii. 1).

The Desire of All Nations (Hag. ii. 7).

The Sun of Righteousness (Mal. iv. 2, 6).

Each of these descriptive titles is once used—He is the true Light (John i. 9); the Light of the World (John ix. 5), even though the world is too

blind to see. Set in darkness for a moment, the Sun went down at the Cross, but is risen again; and soon His full rays shall enlighten the earth. The Lord shall arise upon Israel, and all nations and kings shall gather to the brightness of His rising. The Rising of a Sun that shall never set, —the Lord, the everlasting Light (Isa. lx. 1-3, 19, 20).

As "The Latter Rain" He will come and bring all blessing to maturity and full fruition. "Messenger of the Covenant" fulfilling all the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The One of whom it was said, There is "no beauty that we should desire Him; He is despised and rejected of men," shall yet again reverse the former things, and come to be hailed as the "Desire of all nations," the Light of their eyes, and delight of all hearts.

And last of all the Old Testament prophecies, He is the rising "Sun of Righteousness," who shall fill the world with light, and truth, and glory. A sceptre of righteousness shall be the sceptre of His kingdom. "A King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, . . . and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. xxiii. 5, 6).

How many and how varied, how comprehensive and detailed, are the prophetic Scriptures yet awaiting their fulfilment! With what intensity are they urged on the careless, heedless men and

women whose very regardlessness of God and of His Christ is their mortal crime! And yet with what heart-sustaining promise, hope-inspiring consolation, the words come to the wearied, waiting, and believing heart!

The Lord Himself shall come again. According to the Scriptures, He is coming to the earth, to the Mount of Olives, to the city of Jerusalem, and to His own Mount Zion: He comes as Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, to claim His long-alienated rights in this world, and establish its government in universal righteousness. The eternal Creator and Owner of the world and all beings and all things therein, is to be present, and visible to mortal eyes; resplendent in heavenly glory, filling the earth with His light—giving direction to every pursuit, accomplishment to every purpose, restraint to evil; sustaining right, and punishing wrong: to be worshipped on earth, as well as in heaven, in His true Deity and glorified humanity.

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CHAPTER II.

Coming as Lord and Master.

HE Lord is coming to "take account of His servants" (Matt. xviii. 23). The truths connected with this are of the deepest importance to all the people of God. We read in 1 Thess. i. how those early converts turned to God from their idols, *to serve* the living and true God.

The summons God sent to Pharaoh when His people where in bondage ran thus, "Israel is My Son, My first-born." "Let My son go, that he may serve Me" (Ex. iv. 22, 23).

"By grace are ye saved . . not of works; created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 8-10). We are, therefore, *saved to serve* the Lord, and the Lord is coming to take account of His servants (Matt. xviii. 23). Thus is raised the whole question of

RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD.

This is a truth universal and eternal. Every created being is bound to yield allegiance to his Creator; no diverse nature or position, of cherub, angel, or man, in heaven or earth, can in any way affect the essential claim of God. No change of dispensation or lapse of time, no state of law or

reign of grace, can affect it in the least, whether in time or eternity.

By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth. . . . All things were created by Him and *for Him* (Col. i. 16).

His kingdom ruleth over all. His angels, who retain the excellence of their estate, do His commandments, hearken to the voice of His word . . . do His pleasure (Ps. ciii. 19-21).

Waiting, with wings let down, in the Holy Presence, veiled and still; or going at God's will, going, returning as a lightning flash; ready, willing, responsive, in glad service answering to Him who made them; such are the heavenly cherubim (Ezek. i. 14; x. 15). "Angels which kept not their first estate . . . He hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto judgment" (Jude 6).

Not yielding to God His due, Adam fell. The elders who will cast their crowns before the throne of God confess that no being should live in His universe, save only for the pleasure of Him for Whom he was created. The obligation to serve God begins with creation of intelligence, and can never cease. The indictment against our race, which justly merits perdition, is recorded thus, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23); and the verdict against every man stands, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." "Tekel," written on

the palace wall against a heathen king, is also written in our Bibles against ourselves (Dan. v. 23, 27).

By the grace of God, and through the crucified and risen Saviour, has been proclaimed to us the forgiveness of sins; and that by Him all that believe are justified from all things (Acts xiii. 39); justified freely by His grace (Rom. iii. 24); but it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and this very redemption has purchased us for God by the precious blood of Christ, and adds yet another claim upon our service, both in body and in spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

The threefold claim of Isa. xliii. 1 is thus affirmed: "I have created thee [for My glory—ver. 7.]; I have formed thee [for Myself, that thou shouldest show forth My praise—ver. 21]; I have redeemed thee [to God by the blood of the Lamb—Rev. v. 9]; thou art Mine." By reason of his creation, every man owes service to his Maker; and every man who is accepted in Christ owes his life and service to his Redeemer as well.

The fallen man lies condemned in the breach of his obligations; but for the man recreated in Christ a provision is made, which is a transcendent marvel of grace. God the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in him, and, himself powerless, yet God worketh in him, both to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. ii. 13); and all God asks is a subject will, and an obedient heart, dominated by the constraining love of Christ, yielded to the indwelling Spirit; and He will accomplish in that

being all that God has foreordained for him to do.

Such relations existing as these Scriptures show, it follows of necessity that the Lord and Master will, at the appointed time, take account of His servants. The lessons of the pounds in Luke xix., and talents in Matt. xxv., directly bear on this truth, and we shall learn that service on earth which is approved by the Master, will lead to further, more extensive, and yet happier service in the glorious ages to come.

SAVED BY GRACE.

By God's infinite mercy, we live in the Day of Salvation—a blessed period during which God says to the believer, "By grace ye are saved" (Eph. ii. 5).

From deepest depth of sin and degradation, dead in trespasses and sins, God raises us together with Christ to a seat with Him in heavenly glory. God vindicates His grace in doing this by the death and resurrection of Christ—He does it for ever; and this action of His free and sovereign grace is never to be interfered with, added to, nor detracted from.

SAVED FOR SERVICE.

Collateral with this runs the truth, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 10). This does not clash with the truth that we are eternally saved by grace apart from works altogether, but is a sequence of it. In the faith which lays hold on

Christ as God's salvation, we "turn to God from idols"; and this is our conversion. Nevertheless, the next word in 1 Thess. i. 9 runs, "to serve the living and true God." We are, then, saved by grace alone (Eph. ii. 5), and saved to serve (1 Thess. i. 9; Eph. ii. 10). No one can begin to serve thus until he is saved. But the unbeliever will, nevertheless, be judged for his failure to serve his Creator. His conscience now, and more keenly hereafter, will convict him of his guilt in this—the law makes more manifest to what degree; but none can find power to fulfil God's will until, contrite, repentant, and believing in Christ, God renews him, and gives His Spirit to enable His will to be wrought out in him. This gift of grace is within reach, and responsibility is all the greater in consequence. This life of service, commencing at our conversion to God, is to proceed all through our days on earth, and every step is to be a "work of faith" and "labour of love" (1 Thess. i. 3).

POWER FOR SERVICE.

The power to perform lies wholly and absolutely in the Holy Spirit given to us, that He may work in us to will and to do God's good pleasure (Phil. ii. 13). Our true, necessary, and only co-operation is to yield ourselves entirely into the direction, leading, quickening, and enabling of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, who says, "Without Me ye can do nothing."

We may apprehend all this intellectually, but it will be utterly fruitless unless we are living and

abiding in communion with Christ. This communion will be established and maintained by the Holy Spirit, provided we do not persist in walking contrary to Him, disregarding His admonitions, and quenching His operations.

All true service will be what God will work in us, and through us, and yet in His wonderful grace He will accredit it to us, if we only keep His Word in us, and yield ourselves to His Spirit. Christ is at the head of all the service of God, directing it, and empowering the servants, by means of His Spirit, from the seat of the Executive, the Father's throne in glory.

REVIEW OF SERVICE.

When the Lord comes to take account of His servants, He will review all the work, and see of what sort it is (1 Cor. iii. 13). Tried by His searching fire, its quality will be manifested; and what stands the test will be rewarded. What will not stand is wrought in the flesh, not in the Spirit. It is disapproved, and in mercy will be burned up, out of sight and out of memory; but the worker suffers loss (1 Cor. iii. 15). The time of this review inspection must be after the period of service is over. We are told the Lord will come and take account of His servants. This connects the time with His second coming. The place is called the Judgment-seat of Christ, where we must be manifested (2 Cor. v. 10).

There are two great parables in which the

Lord teaches the principles of His service (Luke xix. 11-26 and Matt. xxv. 14-30).

PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

In Luke xix., the Lord describes a nobleman going away to a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. In this we recognise Himself. He calls His ten servants, entrusts them with one pound each, and bids them trade with it till He comes (Luke xix. 13, R.V.). When He returns, having received the kingdom, He calls the servants that He may know how much each one has gained by trading. The servants say what the Lord's pound has gained ; they know the work is really His. In one servant's use the pound gains ten more ; in another's, five. It is shown the pound can gain ten, and the first must have used it more diligently than the second. This is marked in the difference of reward.

BANKING AND TRADING.

There is a trust which is given to all of us alike, and that is God's Word. As money is put in the bank for safe keeping, and to earn interest, so God's Word can only be kept safely in our hearts. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart" (Ps. cxix. 11), and, hid there, it will produce fruit in our lives, and return in gratitude, praise and worship to God, and thus He will receive His interest. But to trade with it, we must so use it as to get the truth into the hearts of others, and thus it will be multiplied. In doing this we receive blessing through others, which makes complete the analogy with

trading, and is gain for the Master. The unprofitable servant neither trades with it nor banks it, and receives severe censure.

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

The servant parable in Matt. xxv. 14-30 is different in many respects. In this the Master considers the difference in the abilities of the different servants, and gives trusts differing in accordance with those abilities. The trusts are the Master's goods. Though the trusts are so different, the reward of the first and second servants is exactly the same. Each has doubled the amount given. The difference between them really lies in their several abilities, and for this difference they are not responsible. This is most encouraging for the servants of small ability. The rewards in this case go further than in Luke, for what can exceed the prize of entering into the joy of the Lord? and this is put before the humblest and least capable servant, if only he yields himself to the Holy Spirit to work out through him the good pleasure of God.

Again, we read of the unprofitable servant. He was afraid, like Adam fallen (Gen. iii. 10); misjudges God, slanders Him, and comes short of His glory. The cases of the other servants prove that God's requirements were capable of fulfilment. Had he gained even one talent more, he would have had commendation fully equal to the others, but he buried the Lord's talent by digging it into the earth—burying his Lord's goods in his earth-

liness. He of the 19th Luke treated the pound with more respect, but, even so, he put it out of any possibility of usefulness to himself or to anyone. The doom of the servant, according to Matthew, is to be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Comparing the seven passages where this expression is used, it becomes sadly plain that this is the doom of the lost.

WEEPING, WAILING, AND GNASHING OF TEETH.

Matt. viii. 12.—No faith . . . cast out.
„ xiii. 42.—Offend . . . cast into . . . fire.
„ „ 50.—Wicked . . . cast into . . . fire.
„ xxii. 13.—Bound ... cast into outer darkness
„ xxiv. 51.—Cut asunder . . . hypocrites.
„ xxv. 30.—Unprofitable . . . cast into outer darkness.
Luke xiii. 27.—Depart from Me . . . not known . . . workers of iniquity.

RECOMPENSE OF REWARD.

The rewards promised to the overcomers in the Seven Churches (Rev. ii. and iii.) all imply a responsibility in those addressed to respond to the Lord's behests. The Lord is coming quickly, and His reward is with Him, to give every man according as his work shall be (Rev. xxii. 12). It is clear that this taking account of all our service is the inquiry that will be instituted at the judgment-seat of Christ. The rewards for faithful and diligent service will be most highly prized. We know well that approval and commendation is valued in proportion as the person who gives it

is esteemed, honoured, and respected. Moses had respect unto the recompense of the reward, and so should we have. (Heb. xi. 26.) The truth presented in both of these parables is connected with the kingdom. The nobleman went away to receive a kingdom. Enemies would not have him to reign. The rewards have to do with authority and positions in the State—over cities, or the ruling over many things. Other promised rewards are crowns, which are always worn on State occasions in a kingdom.

The joy promised as a reward for faithful service is the joy of the Lord. We are told of the joy of the Good Shepherd, who went out to seek the lost sheep for His Father. He tells us (Luke xv. 5) of His joy

WHEN HE FINDS HIS SHEEP.

Again, as He brings it home He calls His friends and neighbours to rejoice with Him—a fellowship of joy (ver. 6). Heaven responds with sympathetic joy (ver. 7). "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it" (Isa. xliv. 22, 23). "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6). Who was the Sower? Who sowed in tears as He? Who shall reap in joy like Him? Still, there are those who gather with Him. When the Lord of the harvest brings home His sheaves, He will have His reapers

and sowers with Him, and they shall joy before Him, according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil (Isa. ix. 3). Servants they are, verily, but He calls them friends (John xv. 15), friends and neighbours who have lived near Him, wrought with Him, learned His interests and His ways, and can rejoice in His joy. What joy to be saved with God's salvation! Will it add to or detract from that joy to be workers together with Him in bringing others to Himself for the travail of His soul? Weeping is over for Him, and His joy is come, but for those in whom the Spirit of Christ is dwelling, weeping may still endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning—a morning without clouds (Ps. xxx. 5). Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

SERVICE IN GLORY.

Both these parables lead on to the future. The unused pound or talent is taken from the unprofitable servant, and given to the one that has ten. What can this be for? The answer is in Rev. xxii. 3. In the coming days of glory in the New Jerusalem, where they see His face, and His name is in their foreheads, then His servants shall serve Him. One pound given to trade for Him on earth, by a servant encompassed with difficulties, gained ten pounds. At the judgment-seat there is approval and another pound added. And a field for further trading is opened in the heavens. How much more may be gained for the Master then, who can say?

This much, at least, we learn, that the service of earth is just a preliminary apprenticeship for the service in glory. When we think of *saving grace*, we can see a sinner dead in trespasses and sins pardoned and quickened and raised to glory a son and heir of God, presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. It is all of grace—all God's work, all for Christ's sake, all included in the redemption He obtained by the one offering He made on the cross. As we behold this wonderful grace we say in adoring worship, "What hath God wrought!" (Num. xxiii. 23). When we think of *serving grace*, we say, "Thou also hast wrought all our works in us" (Isa. xxvi. 12; Phil. ii. 13).

A STRICT SERVICE.

In His dealing with sinners through Christ, God's grace is limitless. In dealing with servants, the Lord is extremely strict. Every good service is a strict service and good servants are glad it is so. There is no laxity allowed. One of the foremost and most honoured of the Lord's servants was Barnabas, a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, through whom much people was added to the Lord; and he was specially chosen to build up young converts in the faith. He was called with Paul, and sent on the first mission to the Gentiles (Acts xiii.). When they proposed to commence a second missionary journey, Barnabas wished to take his nephew Mark with them. Paul objected, because Mark turned back from the work on the former mission; and contention was so sharp that

these two servants parted from each other. Paul chose Silas, and started on a mission tour; and the Holy Spirit records their work and the Lord's guidance and blessing all the way. Barnabas took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus, his own country, and is never again mentioned in the Book of Acts. It was as though the Lord had suspended him from the service for a time. Happily, we know from 1 Cor. ix. 6, Barnabas was in the service again, and as prominent as ever. Paul, later on, writes of Mark, "He is profitable to me for the service" (2 Tim. iv. 11). Thus we learn the grace that watches over the children of God, as well as the strictness that keeps order among the servants. Paul was more jealous for the Master's interests, and this, it seems, the Lord endorsed; and we do well to remember this lesson, lest we make light of holy things.

"I SAY UNTO ALL, WATCH."

Watchfulness is particularly enjoined in Mark xiii. 35-37. The time of the Master's return is uncertain, unknown (ver. 32); it may happen during either of the four night watches. The difference of time, and of day and night, in different parts of the world tells us that in different places all the different stages of day and night will be represented. This shows how literally the ordinary affairs of daily life will be affected, and how suddenly He will come.

LOINS GIRDED AND LIGHTS BURNING.

(Luke xii. 35, etc.). Loins girded is prepared-

ness for active service ; lights burning in the life illuminated by the Holy Spirit testifying for Christ in the world. Moreover, the Lord desires that His servants should be distinguished by their hope of His return, so much so that others may know it. A man looks like a traveller, when you see him equipped for a journey, hastening towards the station. So He wishes us to be like men that wait for their Lord ; all our affairs and belongings should be consistent with this expectation. The Lord's coming is the hope of salvation which we look forward to (Rom. xiii. 11). It is called a helmet (1 Thess. v. 8). The helmet is the defence of a soldier's head ; with it on he can meet the foe with confidence. Such is this hope to a child of God. It brings deliverance from every possible evil that can happen. At the same time the helmet distinguishes the wearer from others who do not wear it. So we are to be in this world like men who wait for their Lord.

When the apostle Paul, with Silas and Timothy, were staying in Thessalonica, they left a testimony behind them, by the example of their lives : "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes" (1 Thess. i. 5). The lives of these evangelists bore out what they preached. What is the use of telling men the Lord is coming, if they can say : "You cannot believe it yourself, for you live just as we do" ? "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation

and godliness? Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Pet. iii. 11, 14).

CHAPTER III.

Coming as Bridegroom.

INCE the days of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, the prophecy has been declared among men that the Lord is coming to judge the ungodly (Jude 14, 15). In later days God has revealed through His prophets many and varied details of the coming of the Lord to reign on this earth in power and glory. We have already noted how the Scriptures also foretell that, when He comes to take His earthly kingdom, He will be attended in His descent from heaven by all His saints (Jude 14 ; Zech. xiv. 5). If, then, His saints are to be with Him when He comes from heaven, it is evident they must be with Him in heaven before He comes. When and how this shall be is not revealed in the Old Testament prophecies. They were chiefly occupied with foretelling events more or less pertaining to the earth and its inhabitants, and the public manifestations of the personal and Royal Majesty of the King.

The prophecies given by our Lord Himself, which are recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, contain many more details, but chiefly refer to the same great era when the

kingdom of God and of His Christ shall be established in this earth.

In the Gospel of John (chap. xiv.), our Lord unfolds to His disciples a coming event which had never before been revealed ; and the occasion chosen for making it known was just at the moment they were in trouble because He was about to be parted from them.

During the time they had lived with Him so intimately, hearing His words of life and grace, learning His ways, responding in measure to His love, a deep, strong love had grown up between their hearts and Him ; and the thought of parting was beginning to cause the pain of bereavement.

To comfort them in this time of trouble, the blessed Lord opens to them the yet untold counsels of the Father. He reveals to them yet more of the Father and His love. He tells them of the home above, the many mansions in the Father's house. He would go to Him, prepare a place for them, and in His own loving words, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and

RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF,

that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 3). Out of the fulness of His loving heart He speaks to those whose love is drawn out to Himself. He knows well it is true love to Him that makes them sad at parting with Him ; and for this moment is reserved the word of comfort,

the fullest, simplest, most direct, and most loving: "If I go, I will come again." When we part with one we love, what cheers us most is the assurance we shall meet again. When friends promise to meet again, it is but the intention or wish that can be expressed; but when Jesus says it, He foretells it with all the certainty of the Word of God. His word of comfort is Divine and sure. How wide a distinction we can now discern between the solemn warning to an ungodly world of the coming of the Judge, and the brilliant prospect set before loyal subjects of the coming of their King in heavenly glory with universal sway; and, again, between these and

THE PROMISE OF JESUS

to come again to receive unto Himself the objects of His dearest love, the companions of His choice; that He may take them into His fellowship in the Father's love, and into the enjoyment of the home He has gone to prepare for them. In this promise of His love He speaks simply as Jesus, not as Son of Man, the Judge of all, not as King of Glory, nor as Lord of His servants, but as Jesus, God's Son.

Loving hearts surrounded the risen Saviour as He stood for the last time on the brow of Olivet. Quite near is the house where Martha gave Him welcome, and Mary sat at His feet and heard His word. There Lazarus in life, called from his tomb, had sat at the table with Him only seven weeks before. The sweet odour of the spikenard

poured from the loving hand, foretold in the song of songs (Cant. i. 12), had filled the house. The last precious moments were come, when He, the Light of their eyes and hearts, was to be seen for the last time. And He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven (Luke xxiv. 50, 51). Eyes were straining as He went up, and hearts were sinking with bereavement as the cloud received Him out of their sight. Just then heavenly messengers arrived with words of comfort and hope, sent from the loving heart already entered into glory. "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

And as literal as this record of His departure is to our faith and hearts' conviction, so literal shall be the fulfilment of Zechariah's word, "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." "And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee." So we shall be with Him then. And the family of Bethany, too; and all who watched Him depart. As we think of Jesus, and Bethany, and the group who saw Him off on His way home to His and our Father, His God, our God, do we not feel that another spiritual atmosphere is surrounding our hearts, different from that which we felt when we thought of the coming of the kingdom? And what constitutes the difference? Even the difference between

the effect on the mind of a display of public royal majesty, glory, and power, and that indescribable, heart-filling communion of love-begetting love.

He speaks this promise as

THE COMING BRIDEGROOM,

the true and heavenly Bridegroom of His Church, according to the great mystery afterwards declared in Eph. v.—the great mystery of a relationship between Creator and creature, between Redeemer and redeemed, between Christ and the Church, of which the marriage of Adam and Eve was the type and prophecy.

The disciples to whom Jesus spoke these words of love and comfort were those very apostles who were destined to be the foundations of the Church of God (Eph. ii. 20).

That Church which He had come from heaven to seek and make His Bride; the Church He died to redeem and cleanse from sin; for whom He ascended on high to receive the dowry of the Holy Spirit, and bestow on her that priceless gift, and for whom He will certainly come again as a loving, faithful Bridegroom to take her home to Himself. He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom (John iii. 29) tells the fact of this blessed relationship—mystery though it be.

At the very moment of His ascension (Acts i. 11), as the Lord Jesus was passing through the heavens on His way to God, His exceeding joy (Ps. xliii. 4), His pathway thronged by angelic

hosts acclaiming Him King of Glory (Ps. xxiv.), He was still thinking of the sorrowing hearts He had left watching on the Mount of Olives. Just then He sent two heavenly messengers to comfort them with His message.

When the Holy Spirit comes as the promise of the Father to guide us into all truth and show us things to come (John xvi. 12-14), He maintains in the hearts of the people of God the hope of the fulfilment of this promised return of the Lord, and teaches those who had turned to God from idols, to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus (1 Thess. i. 10).

The Spirit also reveals yet further details of this coming of the Lord to receive His people to Himself, in 1 Thess. iv. 14. He tell us how it will meet the condition of those who sleep in Jesus, and those who are alive and remain to His coming; He tells us the place appointed for the meeting. It is the name of Jesus here also that gives character to the scene; and "the Lord Himself," whose first word was, "I will receive you to Myself," again connects together the promises of John xiv. 3 and 1 Thess. iv. 16. The words of comfort then spoken are continued by the Spirit in 1 Thess. iv. 18: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Once again in Rev. xxii. 16: "I, Jesus, have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." He which testifieth these things saith, "Surely I come quickly" (ver. 20).

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THE BRIDE.

We have traced the name of Jesus in all these portions of the great promise of love which He has given to cheer the hearts of His loving, waiting people through all time, from the day when He first said, "Let not your heart be troubled, . . . I will come again" (John xiv. 1, 3), until the day when we shall meet Him in the air (1 Thess. iv. 17). The comfort of love, and the rejoicing of hope, comes by the voice of the Bridegroom, saying to His Bride (even unto you in the churches), "Surely I come quickly." And in all those hearts in whom the Spirit dwells the response of the Spirit and the Bride goes up to Him, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20). "Ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi. 22). So the promise of love wins a response of joy.

As we review these varied revelations, we are led into the marvellous truth—(1) That the Son of God is yet again to be seen on earth. Not to be despised and rejected, but as the Supreme Executor of God's great purposes; bringing the inhabitants of the earth to judgment, purging out wickedness in the persons of the evil-doers: reigning in power and glory over the whole earth, and dispensing the blessings of goodness, righteousness, and peace. (2) He is to have a companionship in the closest fellowship of love, in a relation likened to a bride's. Beings chosen, loved,

cherished, prepared, and ultimately to be displayed in union with Himself, sharing His joys, as well as His honours and glories. This relationship is founded in the affections of His heart for the dearest object of His choice. Her fitness for such a marvellous destiny is no virtue or faithfulness of her own, but she is re-created for this by God the Holy Spirit. The God of all grace calls her to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus (1 Peter v. 10).

SHE IS SANCTIFIED BY THE HOLY GHOST.

That which remains about her of a former fallen state is being cleansed away by the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians v. 26), and every vestige of the fall will be finally done away with when He is seen face to face, and every member of His Church will be like Him, in spirit, soul, and body conformed to His image, perfectly adapted to His companionship, and answering to His love. Then He will present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but . . . holy and without blemish (Eph. v. 27).

(3) The revelation of so glorious a transformation, union, and destiny of part of the human race has been reserved as

A SECRET HID FROM AGES AND GENERATIONS

(Col. i. 26), and has only been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit through the New Testament writings. These prophecies which specially foretell the destiny of the Church, although the latest in time of communication, must necessarily be the

first in order of fulfilment; because it is evident that His coming to receive His saints to Himself, and take them to the Father, and to the place He has gone to prepare for them in heaven, must be fulfilled before He comes from heaven to earth, bringing those saints with Him.

(4) From the moment of the meeting with the Lord in the air, we shall for ever be with Him. With Him in the clouds, with Him at the presentation to the Father (Jude 24), with Him in the Father's house, with Him at the heavenly marriage (Rev. xix. 7), with Him descending to the Mount of Olives, with Him at the judgment of the nations (Matthew xxv. 31), and associated with Him in reigning over all the earth through the Millennial Age; and where He is, there shall we be with Him for ever. How soon may this long-looked-for meeting be an accomplished fact!

THE DEAD IN CHRIST RISE FIRST.

We have yet more to learn through the young converts of Thessalonica. The first epistle to them marks at its opening their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, as shown by their waiting for the Son from heaven (1 Thess. i. 3, 10). Apparently, one or more of their number had "fallen asleep," filling them with dismay and distress, not only because of the bereavement, but also because it would seem to nullify their hope of the Lord's coming. These that have died were waiting for the Lord, and now they have died as others die; so we may die: and what becomes of

the Coming for which we wait?

Again this moment of distress is made the occasion of a fresh word of comfort, and a further revelation of the details of the coming, as given in chapter iv. It concerns, to begin with, those that fall asleep in Jesus (iv. 13). It distinguishes two classes of God's waiting people—the dead in Christ and "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." The dead are to rise first; then "we that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

This clearly establishes the truth that those who fall asleep in Jesus lose nothing of the realisation of the bright prospect they have kept in their patience of hope. So the last verse rings out its glad note, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." It has been comfort all the way along—before the parting (John xiv. 3); at the parting (Act i. 11); during the waiting time (1 Thess. iv. 18).

THEM WHICH SLEEP IN JESUS.

(1 Thessalonians iv. 14). When the Lord said of Lazarus, "Our friend sleepeth" (John xi. 11), the disciples did not understand at first; but He went to awake him out of sleep, and did awake him by His Divine word, "Lazarus, come forth." And he that was dead came forth. This shows it is the body that sleeps in the tomb. As to the spirit, we now know it departs to be with Christ, which is far better (Phil. i. 23). It is absent from the body

and present with the Lord (2 Cor. v. 8). Is this state of the spirit also a sleep of unconsciousness? It is a state "far better" than this present life; and yet of this it is written, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. vi. 10). Many a little child is so happy at the prospect of what to-morrow is bringing that it cannot sleep to-night, and it knows well that sleep is not better than rejoicing. For the spirit to be asleep would not be as good as always rejoicing here. But always rejoicing in the exceeding joy of the Lord's presence would be far better than being sorrowful, yet rejoicing, in this life. So it is the body only that sleeps in the dust, and the spirit rejoices in communion with Christ.

Even so, it must wait in patience with Christ for a yet happier time when this imperfect state shall cease, and the happy spirit be clothed upon with a glorified body (2 Cor. v. 4). There is yet another class of God's people, those of whom it is written,

"WE WHICH ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN

shall be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17). Who are these? Verse 14 defines them as "we who believe that Jesus died and rose again. This belief is according to the terms of 1 Cor. xv. 1-4, which is a declaration of the Gospel by which Paul himself and all others who have received it are saved: "how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He rose again the

third day, according to the Scriptures." Those who have truly believed this Gospel of their salvation have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise . . . until the day of redemption (Ephesians i. 13; iv. 30). Under this abiding seal of God they are held in readiness for this translation if living, or this resurrection if dead in Christ.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

In 1 Cor. xv., more particular teaching is given concerning these two distinct classes, the living and the dead. Verse 50. "Flesh and blood [i.e., the living body] cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption [the dead body] inherit incorruption. 51. We [those now living] shall not all sleep, but we [living or dead] shall all be changed. 52. For . . . the dead shall be raised incorruptible [beyond liability to die again], and we [the living] shall be changed. 53. For this corruptible [dead body] must put on incorruption, and this mortal [body liable to die] must put on immortality [a state beyond any liability ever to die.]" 54. When all this is accomplished, death is swallowed up in victory. For death cannot again overtake those that are raised out of it; neither can it ever reach those that are immortal. 57. Thanks be to God, this victory is given to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

VICTORY.

This mighty change shall be wrought, this victory won, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. xv. 52). The assurance this Gospel

gives is the solid foundation of steadfastness, encouragement to serve the living and true God in the labour of love while waiting for God's Son from heaven, even Jesus (ver. 58).

Such a glorious resurrection is in itself a complete victory. Even the death of a believer has an element of triumph in it. It is not judicial and penal, like the death unto which sin reigns (Rom. v. 21); it is likened to taking of rest in sleep, or the sowing of a seed in expectation of its springing into a new life. Thus, of the body of a believer it is said, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body." For a time it was earthy; for eternity, heavenly; for a few years bearing the image of Adam; for all eternity bearing the image of Christ, the heavenly Man in the heavenly kingdom. So again our hearts unite in ascribing thanks unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; and may the kindling exultation these words inspire spread from heart to heart among the children of God, and this anthem be maintained in ceaseless praise till earthly scenes of joyful anticipation are exchanged for an eternal heavenly home of love and joy, "for ever with the Lord."

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRANSLATION.

N the preceding chapters we have distinguished the four greatly differing characters in which the Lord is presented, in the Scriptures which foretell His Second Coming. How He is Coming as the Judge, to execute Divine judgment on ungodly men; as the Universal King, to reign over happy subjects in a restored earth; as the Lord who will come to review the work of His servants; and lastly, as the Bridegroom who will fulfil His promise to His beloved people by coming to receive them to Himself, to make them His companions, in the closest relationship, for ever.

We will now endeavour to consider the various prophecies in the order in which we believe they are to be fulfilled.

The first great event, ever to be before our hearts in perpetual expectancy, is the same that was foretold to comfort the Thessalonians in their distress when their brethren fell asleep in Jesus; it is that descent of the Lord Himself into the air, and His call to us to meet Him there, as described in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. The unspiritual Corinthians were reminded of this expected

coming, to recall them to their true walk before God (1 Cor. i. 7-8).

This is "that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," named by St. Paul as the gladdening prospect and inspiring hope animating God's children in the midst of the work and duty and affairs of every-day life (Titus ii. 13). (See the common affairs from ii. 1 to iii. 2.)

It is the purifying hope of seeing Himself at that meeting-place, and of being instantly and perfectly transformed into His likeness (1 John iii.).

The next great manifestation of the love of God is to be at this same long-expected moment; and patience has its most blessed exercise in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, in waiting for this coming of the Bridegroom (2 Thess. iii. 5).

Loving this appearing is to be rewarded with a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. iv. 8). So may we remember the Spirit's word, "Yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37), and the Lord's own oft-repeated word, "Surely I come quickly," which claims the answer of His Bride:

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20).

His gracious parting promise, "I will come again and receive you to Myself" (John xiv. 3), will be made good when He comes into the air and catches us up to meet Him there, that thenceforward and for ever we shall be with Him where

He is (1 Thess. iv. 16-17).

THE THREE CALLS.

The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with an assembling shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Thess. iv. 16). Here are three distinct and mighty awakening sounds.

The shout, the voice, the trump. We learn from 1 Cor. xv. 52 that the effect of the

SOUNDING OF THE TRUMPET

is that the dead in Christ are raised, and the living believers are changed.

Those who have been sleeping in their graves for days, or for centuries, or for thousands of years, are to be instantaneously raised in spiritual bodies, incorruptible, glorified, and in power (1 Cor. xv. 42-44), and will stand alive on the earth for a moment. At the same sound of the trump of God, the living saints will be changed. These mortal bodies will become immortal, no more subject to sickness or death, and will be endowed with a constitution adapted to the environment of heaven.

THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL

connects our thoughts with the meeting-place in the air. There are principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world; wicked spirits in the heavenly places above our heads, where Satan reigns as prince of the power of the air (Eph. ii. 2 and vi. 12). It may be the voice of

Michael the Archangel, one of the chief of the heavenly princes, will summon the angelic hosts to encircle and guard the meeting-place in the air, seeing the Lord has chosen the midst of Satan's realm as the part of His dominions where He will receive His people to Himself; keeping His promise to His beloved saints, and notifying His conquered foe at the same moment and place that his time is short. Satan will know the uselessness of contending with that overwhelming power, and must submit.

Reserved for the voice of the Lord Himself is that

GLAD ASSEMBLING SHOUT,

bidding His risen and glorified saints to rise from earth to the clouds and meet Him at last; there and then to see His face, and to be made like Him; for we shall see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2).

Such is the glorious prospect set before us. Have our affections been so drawn to Christ that this prospect has become the absorbing hope of our lives? The patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father (1 Thess. i. 3).

A joyful, blessed, and purifying hope, which may at any moment be realised. It is only the Spirit of God dwelling in the child of God who can awaken our affections for Christ, in response to His eternal and changeless love for us; so that we may long for His coming and keep ourselves wholly for Him. Ready always to welcome Him,

and all the while seeking those things which please Him.

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS (1 Cor. xv. 20, 23).

This determines the order of the resurrection of God's redeemed people. Christ first; afterwards they that are His at His coming. This also teaches us very definitely how all our blessing depends on the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

None can precede Him who is the first that should rise from the dead (Acts xxvi. 23). If He were not raised, we should yet be in our sins, and all who have fallen asleep in Christ would have perished. But Christ is risen from the dead, and is the Firstfruits of them that slept. He is the first-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence (Col. i. 18). There is no difficulty in respect of the son of the widow of Sarepta, the Shunammite's son, Jairus's daughter, widow of Nain's son, or Lazarus, because none of these were raised in the same order of resurrection. In the first of these cases Elijah prayed, "Let this child's soul come into him again" (1 Kings xvii. 21). Thus is described what took place in this and all the other cases referred to; the soul returned to the body, and to the mortal state, and earthly surroundings. This is not a resurrection from among the dead in power and glory, after the order of the resurrection of Christ. The raising of Lazarus affords much instruction on this subject. In many respects the

circumstances of his death and burial were very like those described of our Lord ; the cave and the stone, the grave-clothes and napkin, and the place where the dead was laid. Yet there are marked contrasts also. The loud and mighty voice of the Lord awakened the dead, and he came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. These grave-clothes consist of a strip of material seventy to a hundred yards in length, which is bound round and round the limbs and body. So the Lord said, "Loose him." It would take some considerable time to unwrap all these folds of material, and Lazarus could not possibly have unwrapped himself. The description given of the grave-clothes of our Lord is very different.

He rose out of them without unwrapping or disturbing a single fold that was bound round the body, leaving the napkin, too, just as it had been bound round the head, so marking the place where the Lord had lain (Matt. xxviii. 6). Peter and John, looking on these wrappings, could see the evidence of a miraculous rising, and leaving behind the grave-clothes undisturbed. "They saw, and believed" (John xx. 6-9). The tomb empty before the stone was moved, or seal broken, gave further evidence of a resurrection in power ; while Lazarus was raised still in weakness, for he needed to be loosed from his bands, and was loosed by mortal hands more able than his own.

There is a resurrection characterised by power and glory, and of a spiritual body (1 Cor. xv. 43

44). Such was not Lazarus' ; but Christ was raised in this order ; and He was the first who ever rose thus, triumphant over all the power of death. Praise God, there are others to follow Him.

"AFTERWARD THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S

at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 23). His resurrection is the promise of ours. "I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John xi. 25).

The Holy Spirit reveals to us this mystery : we shall not all sleep, but we shall *all* be changed,

IN A MOMENT,

in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. So sudden, so quick, so instantaneous. No time to prepare if not ready before.

The trumpet will sound, and the mighty consequences will have been accomplished in a moment —too quick to see what is happening. It is plain God meant this expectation should keep the hearts of His people ever on the alert, even in the early days, because it is the true attitude of the Bride : and the Church has always been called to that glorious and blessed relationship. How much more should this hope govern our hearts now, in these last days when the coming is so much nearer. There is a moment coming when we shall suddenly quit this earth, and meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv. 18). Meanwhile, "beloved

brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58).

THE GOSPEL OF OUR SALVATION.

The two principal Scriptures which give the details of the coming of the Lord to receive His people to Himself are 1 Cor. xv., and 1 Thess. iv. 13 to 18. The chapter in Corinthians opens with a brief but comprehensive statement of the Gospel preached by the apostle, by which every one who truly believes it is saved. "How that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." The passage referred to in 1 Thess. iv. begins with a reference to this same Gospel: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again" (ver. 13).

It is in the reception of this Gospel that the soul first begins to take in the love of God, which He commends to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom. v. 8). Then we begin to know and believe the love that God hath to us (1 John iv. 16), and we love Him because He first loved us (1 John iv. 19). According to promise, God gives us His Holy Spirit (Eph. i. 13). He leads us to know the love of Christ (Eph. iii. 19); and into the one Hope of our calling (Eph. iv. 4), which is to see His face, and be with Him, and like Him for ever. He awakens a desire after Christ in our hearts' affections, which is

the true reciprocal love returning to Christ in response to His love to us. If His be like a bridegroom's love, then the love the Spirit awakens in us is what corresponds to that love. Since the Lord Jesus ascended, it is impossible that anyone could love Him in this manner unless the love were awakened by the indwelling Holy Spirit. But where the Spirit is dwelling, the heart knows and returns the love of Christ. And when His voice is heard, "I am the bright and Morning Star," He is recognised, and the glad response goes back to Him, "Come." It goes out to Him from the Spirit and the Bride, whose love and voice is one (Rev. xxii. 16, 17). This is the response of hearts in which the Spirit dwells, and is not possible otherwise.

The nominal Christian, who has not received the faith of the Gospel in his heart, knows nothing of this love of Christ. He has not His Spirit, and cannot love His coming. The mention of it only awakens feelings of dread of a coming Judge.

It is the presence of the Holy Spirit, given to each true believer in the Gospel of our salvation, which prepares his heart to say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20). This presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer's heart is, no doubt, the meaning of the oil in the vessel, in the parable of Matt. xxv. 4.

Of those who have received this Gospel of Salvation it says in 1 Cor. xv. 51, "We shall not all sleep,

BUT WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED,

in a moment." According to 1 Thess. iv., if *we* believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them *also* which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him (ver. 14). That says the believers and the sleeping ones will be closely associated. We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede them which are asleep (ver. 15); so definitely teaching us there is no translation of living ones before the complete translation of all the dead and living together.

The dead in Christ shall first rise, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up *together with them*. *We* who believe, *we* who are alive and remain, *we* shall be caught up. Both Scriptures seem to give the same testimony—viz., that all who believe in Christ as their personal Saviour will be taken up, at one and the same time, together with those raised from their graves.

LET US NOT SLEEP

as do others, but let us watch and be sober. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day (1 Thess. v. 5, 6). We are constituted by grace children of light and of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness. As such we are to put on for an helmet the *hope of salvation*.

What is this hope? Romans viii. 16-25 shows that all the creation groans and travails and waits; and we also wait. The creation waits the manifestation of the sons of God; and we wait for the adoption, the

REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY.

This glorious consummation is a part of our salvation, which is ever drawing nearer, and is now so much nearer than when we first believed (Rom. xiii. 11); and having been sealed with the Spirit when we believed the Gospel of our salvation (Eph. i. 13), we are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph. iv. 30). That is, until this consummation of our salvation.

At the present time we are receiving the salvation of our souls (1 Pet. i. 9); for he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life (John iii. 36); but we have not yet realised the salvation of our body as we shall do in that day of redemption, when our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall come from heaven, and change our present bodies of humiliation, and fashion them like His body of glory (Phil. iii. 20).

Notwithstanding the urgent appeal, "Let us not sleep," we all slumbered and slept (Matt. xxv. 5). So comes the awakening call; it is now

HIGH TIME TO AWAKE

out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer (Rom. xiii. 11, 12). The moments are too full of happiness and glad expectation to waste in sleep; let us watch and be sober. Let us revive in our hearts the hope of the coming of our Saviour, and try to awaken others too, who are called in the same hope of our calling (Eph. iv. 4).

If we are forgetting this hope by reason of worldly association, then it is called sleeping

among the dead. Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee. Look carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph. v. 14-17). Buy up every opportunity of pleasing and serving the Lord while we wait for Him.

Praise God, the redemption of our body is a part of our salvation, and that, we know, is all of grace (Eph. ii. 5). Jesus obtained eternal redemption by the shedding of His precious blood (Heb. ix. 12). So the redemption of our body and change like to His glorious body is assured us when He comes, as an act of God's grace apart from our faithfulness.

WENT IN WITH HIM TO THE MARRIAGE (Matt. xxv. 10).

If Jesus is the Bridegroom, the marriage must be His. Rev. xix. describes the scene, and it is in heaven. There is heard the voice of the great multitude raising the "Hallelujah!" Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come. This tells us that after the coming of our Lord into the air, and the great gathering together unto Him, the next event is to ascend into heaven. This, again, we find, is yet further fulfilling the promise, "In My Father's house . . . I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (John xiv. 2, 3). He will come into the air, and receive us to Himself, and then He will take us to the place He has prepared.

CHAPTER V.

HEAVENLY SCENES.

S we have already learnt, when the Bridegroom comes He will take His ready ones to be with Himself for ever. Their readiness consists in the Presence of God the Holy Spirit (Matt. xxv. 4), who has come to abide in all those who are truly trusting in Christ (Eph. i. 13, 14), and are by Him, and together with Him, enabled to welcome the Coming Bridegroom (Rev. xxii. 17, 20). Of this He gives the consciousness to the soul in whom He dwells (1 John iv. 13).

The marriage is to be celebrated in heaven (Rev. xix. 1, 6, 7). Taking these Scriptures together, we are taught that after the gathering together of the Lord's people to Himself in the air, He will proceed heavenward, taking us with Him.

A succession of heavenly scenes then unfold before our spiritual vision.

1. The ascent into the heavens, presentation to the Father, and introduction into the Father's house, the eternal home of God's children (John xiv. 3; Jude 24).

2. The throne of God and the Lamb. Elders

enthroned as kings and priests unto God (Rev. iv.).

3. The choir of the redeemed. The seraphim and elders leading the public worship of the universe (Rev. v.).

4. The Judgment-seat of Christ (2 Cor. v. 10).

5. The marriage of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7).

6. The marriage supper (Rev. xix. 9).

7. The heavens opened for the descent of the King of kings (Rev. xix. 11).

THE ORDER OF SEQUENCE

of these glorious heavenly scenes arises by comparing the Scriptures that foretell them, as we will do presently; but rather than insisting on this particular order of events, it is of the greatest importance to distinguish the events one from another.

In these various scenes the relationships between God and His people are quite distinct; and if we are to follow and grasp the revelations, we must bear in mind the difference of the scenes in which appear the relations between God and worshipper, Father and child, the Lamb and His Bride, the Host and His guests, the Lord and His servants.

We will now refer to the Scriptures guiding us to this succession of events.

1. The gathering together to Christ, according to 1 Thess. iv., seems to be the first act in fulfilment of the loving promise of the Lord Jesus to come again and receive us to Himself (John xiv. 2, 3).

Having begun to fulfil His promise, we should naturally look for the completion of it, by taking us to the place He has gone to prepare. This is not in the air, but in His Father's house.

But we cannot conceive that He would show us the place until He has first presented us to the Father Himself, whose very presence and love constitute the blessedness of that eternal home. Considering this climax of Love's thoughtfulness and exceeding joy leads us to place this first of all the heavenly scenes which will follow the meeting in the clouds. Next, the completion of His Word in John xiv. 2, 3, follows in perfect fitness, and He will take His loved and chosen ones into the home He has gone to prepare, that where He has His home we may have part with Him, even in the Father's house.

2. In Rev. iv. we see the heavenly throne of God surrounded by the elders crowned as kings. The preceding chapters contained addresses of the Lord to His Churches still on the earth, *after which* the scene is transferred to heaven, and we recognise among the elders there the members of the Church.

3. In Rev. v., instead of kingly state, we hear the same elders uniting with seraphim in leading the public worship of the universe ascribed to the Lamb of God. We shall see as we proceed that it is the grace of God alone that places, in each of these wonderful positions of blessing, glory, and happiness, those who are redeemed unto God

by the blood of Christ. It is all of grace and not of works. No question of faithfulness on our part, nor reward of merit of any kind, can have any place here. We are saved by grace alone, and the same grace of the God of all grace calls His saved ones to His eternal glory, which shines forth at the throne of God and the Lamb, and is the theme of the new song of the heavenly choir (1 Peter v. 10).

Not until grace has told out all its fulness of love in the home, of glory in the throne, and of joy in the midst of the worshippers, can a time or place be found for a judgment-seat, where the service of men can be taken into account, of what sort it is. Precedence must surely be given to the grace of God, and the outcome of the work of Christ; and this must stand clear and distinct from any work of a creature, however wrought of God in Him, and however graciously approved.

4. Therefore, we think, the judgment-seat of Christ must follow, and not precede, the scenes already mentioned.

5. At the marriage of the Lamb grace is again in the ascendant, for if the Bride be of human race, nothing but grace could love, or choose, or bring her to such a position. That she is a Bride is all of grace; but Rev. xix. 8 speaks chiefly of her attire—the righteous acts of saints.

These must be inspected, reviewed, and that which is of God separated from that which is of man; but this review of the actions of God's

people is the subject of the judgment-seat, so that it must come before the marriage.

6. The marriage supper naturally follows the marriage, and is so described in Rev. xix. 9.

7. The next scene is the opening of the heavens (xix. 11), so that the heavenly King may go forth. This is obviously the last of the scenes in heaven preceding that great event—the descent of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Mount of Olives, attended by all His saints (Zech. xiv. 5).

We will now proceed to consider further these seven glorious heavenly scenes.

I. THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

Let us inquire what are the characteristics chiefly presented in regard to it.

First, the Presence of the Father Himself.

There could be no "Father's house" unless He Himself were there. John xiii. 1—Jesus is just about to leave this earth; where is He going? Unto the Father. The Father is more to Him than any place could be. Only once does He tell us of the "Father's house"; but how often He speaks of the Father! (John xiii. 3; xiv. 28; xv. 5, 16; xvi. 28; xvii. 11, 13). It is the Father Himself who fills the heart of Jesus, and thus He tells it out, "And now I come to Thee." He would draw our affections, too, to the Father, rather than to heaven. And yet so little do we take in what He would have us learn that we much more often speak of "going to heaven," and less naturally say, "Unto the Father." May

we be more filled with the Spirit of Christ, and we shall think, and speak as He did.

The glorious name of the City of God, in the coming kingdom, is Jehovah-Shammah (the Lord is there—Ezek. xlviii. 35). We may also know that the glory and joy of the heavenly home is the Presence of the Father there.

Second, the Father's House is the Son's eternal home. Subject to the presence of the Father Himself, our Lord does tell us of His house, and the place He has gone to prepare.

We cannot conceive of a state of perfect happiness where there is no home, nor *place* of rest. It was in utter self-effacement that Jesus had not *where* to lay His head; and He used to tell His disciples of *where* He was before (John vi. 62). He prays for us, and leaves us His promise that *where* He is, there we shall be also (xiv. 3; xvii. 24; 1 Cor. ii. 9). Here the Spirit says no heart of man has ever conceived the *things* that God hath prepared for them that love Him (John xiv. 2). "In My Father's house" speaks to us of home in its most essential and endearing terms. The home of God and the Son of His love, where room is being got ready for the many sons Jesus is bringing to glory. Here, too, will be the eternal place of worship, where the Father will be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Third, the Father's love reigns there.

This, after all, is what makes home. How God delights to reveal His love to us, His love for His

Son, His love for us! The Father runs to meet the prodigal son. He fell on his neck, and kissed him much (Luke xv. 20, R.V.). What a kiss of pardon, of grace, of love, of joy!—full expression of a Father's love. The tie of relationship that nothing can break is expressed in it: "This my son." But there are yet deeper expressions of the Father's love. John xvi. 27, "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me." How could we help but love Him, when His Spirit taught us how He first loved us? John xvii. 23, "Hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." This is love's fullest measure, farthest reach — infinite, Divine—that loves the most worthy and most lovely, and also the most worthless and most unlovely. And for Jesus to delight in it, matches the love of God with the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. John xvii. 26, "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them." No trace of reserve of His own rights in the Father's love, but He will share all, and enjoy all, together with those the Father has chosen to set His love upon; and this love is the Father's. It carries relationship, love of kindred, with it; that makes the children heirs—heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ. If we are not overwhelmed, it is because our minds are too dense to conceive; we are as yet but partially filled with the Spirit of understanding. But whether we comprehend or not, grace can lead us further into the enjoyment of such "manner of love the

Father hath bestowed upon us" (1 John iii. 1). It goes beyond our understanding to comprehend but this wonderful love is ours—ours now, and for ever,—and our power to enjoy it will grow as we feed our hearts upon it.

Fourth, the Father's grace. He delights to win His children's love, and have them call Him "Abba." We read in the words of Mark's record of Gethsemane, Jesus fell on His face, and appealed, "Abba, Father" (Mark xiv. 36). This is the name used only by the Son when He speaks to the Father Himself. Name only spoken by the Son for the ear of the Father. Heard by none other than the Father; spoken by none other than the Son through eternal ages. Expression of nearest and dearest intimacy and filial love. And now God sends forth into the hearts of His many sons the Spirit of His Son; and that blessed Spirit forms in their hearts and expresses by their lips the same name for the Father's ear and heart—"Abba, Father." The children's name for their Father. What fellowship is this!—fellowship with Jesus in His Father's love. Such manifestation of GRACE again passes all comprehension, but it helps us to think what a home is prepared in the house of such a Father!

Fifth, the Father's joy. In Luke xv., God comes down to us, clothing His thoughts in human words, to reach our human hearts, telling out His grace in terms so natural that anyone may understand.

The shepherd's joy begins when he finds his sheep ; and his joy extends to others as he brings it home. "Rejoice with me." The woman rejoices, too, with her friends and neighbours, telling of gladness that cannot be self-contained, but must expand into a fellowship of joy. But when the Father receives His son back to His heart and home, the whole house rings with the Father s joy. It was meet we should make merry and be glad,

We will not wrest from Israel a blessing specially their own, in Zeph. iii. 17, "He will joy over thee with singing." But we are quite sure, if such is the joy of God in a remnant saved at last in an earthly scene, no less does He joy in those in whom is dwelling the Spirit of His Son. It is He that tells us of His mighty power towards us (Eph. i. 19). Has He not told us of still deeper love, and a most perfect rest? and so we know God sings even now, such is the fulness of His joy.

And from the parable picture of Luke xv. 24 we turn to the Father's home, and our spiritual hearing is entranced with the music of that Divine song of joy.

Again, it is Jesus Who presents His people faultless before the presence of the glory of God our Saviour with exceeding joy (Jude 24, 25). Joy that goes beyond all other measure. The Father's joy to receive His loved ones home. The Son's joy, Who presents them faultless as He is Himself, for they are like Him (1 John iii. 2).

The joy of the Holy Spirit, Whose prayers for us are answered to the full (Rom. viii. 26), and Who is Himself the very Spirit of joy (Isa. lxi.); and the included joy of all who are thus presented.

Sixth, the Father's rest. Home means rest—rest to body, soul, and spirit, where from all care, trouble, and toil there is full relief. This is as we know it. The rest of the Father's house is the rest of God. After His six days of creation work, He held His Sabbath rest (Gen. ii. 2, 3). In infinite satisfaction He could rest in all He created and made. He saw it all, and, behold, it was very good. But an enemy's work marred and spoiled that work, and broke that Sabbath rest. Another work was done, and after six hours of redemption work, begun and finished, God now rests. A Sabbath hour after a finished work. An hour not of minutes, but an eternal rest. And for the Son who wrought that work, His rest is come, for He has sat down at the right hand of God. And we which have believed enter into this rest of God, which nothing can again disturb. Thus we learn the rest of God, the rest of Christ, the rest of home, and in this by faith we rest.

What a home is this in the Father's house,

WHERE GOD THE FATHER DWELLS

with all His children around Him; everything ordered by His love in fulness of joy and eternal rest; and over all presides the God of all grace.

Every detail of the scene bears witness that it

is grace alone that purposed and planned; that brought to perfection and secures for ever all the blessing of that place. The Father's presence is fulness of grace revealed so as to be enjoyed. That the home of the Son should be shared by others can have no cause but grace.

The love of the Father seeks not deserts in the objects of His choice. He loves because God is love, and this again is grace. Joy finds no spring in a creature, but God joys to the full in the happiness He gives. And to rest in all that His love accomplishes, is grace that allows no claim to aught by right.

One claim, one right alone, is known: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." And so the Father's house is the home of sovereign grace for the family of God. And if of grace, then it is not of works. But at the judgment-seat of Christ the whole scene is filled with responsibility, and a searching test of works, their quality and merit. It is but a passing scene, a test of servants' faithfulness in days gone by. The home is the abiding scene of eternal glory, to which we are called by the God of all grace, through Jesus Christ alone (1 Pet. v. 10).

II. THE HEAVENLY THRONE. Rev. iv.

As we contemplate this scene, we seem to have left for a season the calm and quiet privacy and homeliness of the Father's house, and we enter the precincts of the throne of the Majesty in the

heavens. Here is regal splendour and glory, and all the activities of the seat of the government of the universe. The scene is still in heaven, a door is opened that the apostle seer may look within ; and he sees

A THRONE SET IN HEAVEN,

and One who sat thereon. Eight centuries before, Isaiah was called to see the Lord sitting on that throne, high and lifted up, His train filling the Temple. He saw the glorious Seraphim, no doubt the same that John calls the Four Living Creatures (Rev. iv. 6, R.V.), and which he saw in the same close attendance upon the Lord of Hosts (Isa. vi. 3).

Isaiah saw this heavenly scene as it was in his day ; John is given to foresee it as it shall be hereafter (Rev. i. 19). The apostle sees the seven lamps of fire burning before the Throne, which are the Seven Spirits of God (Rev. iv. 5), symbol of the Fulness of the Spirit, in His judgment character ; for the judgments of God are about to fall on the sinful world. This is the Fire of God, for our God is a consuming fire (Heb. xii. 29). Moses saw that great sight, and was told that where that Fire was, it was holy ground (Exod. iii. 5). The very desert was sanctified by that Presence.

THE SERAPHIM.

As Isaiah heard the ceaseless anthem of the holiness of God, his heart condemned him as a man of unclean lips. And so will ours until we

learn the sanctifying power of the sacrifice (Heb. x. 10, 14), as well as the forgiveness of sins through His blood (Eph. i. 7).

John hears the same words, that cease not day or night, warning all created beings that God is holy. May we remember this, and also that He says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Although the description of the Seraphim is partly symbolical, our minds are led to regard them as living persons of exalted station, and of all created beings the highest and nearest to God; so closely associated with His government as to appear to belong to the very throne itself, while other beings surround it. A seraph is a fiery one. "He maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. civ. 4). Veiling their faces with two wings, perhaps to shield them in the dazzling glory, covering their feet in reverence and respect, they have yet two wings with which to fly at His bidding; going at the voice of His Word, going and returning like a lightning flash (Ezek. i. 14). Ministers of His that do His pleasure (Ps. ciii. 21). They bless the Lord, they are heard leading the ascription of glory, honour, and thanks unto their glorious Creator.

GLORIFIED ELDERS.

A marked prominence is given in Rev. iv. to the session of the Elders, enthroned around the throne of God, crowned with golden crowns.

No mention of these is made in Isaiah's day;

he says nothing of Elders, nor even marks their encircling thrones, and, we doubt not, for the simple reason that they were not there. And even yet, so long as there are churches on earth, as described in Rev. i., ii., and iii., there will be no enthroned elders in heaven. We are still living in the days of "*the things which are*" (Rev. i. 19). Rev. iv. is the unveiling of the future, and tells us "*things which shall be hereafter.*" The space around the throne in the heavens, vacant in the days of Isaiah, is seen in John's vision, filled with the thrones of the Elders, who are crowned as kings, yet worshipping as priests unto God.

Very searching to our hearts are their words: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, . . . for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are; . . . for Thy pleasure they were created."

True and just confession of the creature, giving glory and honour to his Creator. Man, descended from Adam, is condemned under the indictment, "I have created him for My glory" (Isa. xliii. 7). He has "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). Created for God's good pleasure, yet the God in whose hand his breath is he has not glorified (Dan. v. 23). He has failed in the purpose of his creation: his very existence is a trespass that calls for the judgment of God. If he still lives, he is a monument of God's mercy; and if he dies, he is an example of God's righteousness (Luke xxiii. 41). But here in the highest courts

of heaven, creatures confess the Creator's due, and live for Him alone. When shall we learn the lesson?

WHO ARE THE ELDERS?

There appears no other clue to the interpretation than the use of the word itself. The original word for elder is used for an old man (see Gen. xliii. 27). It is first used to describe those who hold a leading position, of the elders of Joseph's house, and the elders of Egypt (Gen. l. 7).

Jacob went to Egypt with a family, but his people grew there into a nation, and God first names the elders of Israel in Exod. iii. 16. Thenceforward we frequently read of the elders of Israel, elders of cities, and occasionally elders of other nations. Ever since Gen. l. 7, the expression has acquired the usage that defines an official position of honour and authority.

Seventy men of the elders of Israel were invited into the presence of God at Mount Sinai Exod. xxiv. 1, 9); so many were recognised as elders; many more than the actual number of the tribes.

In Deut. v. 23, the elders are associated with the heads of the tribes of Israel; and in xxxi. 28 we find the expression "the elders of your tribes." Thus the most direct connection is established between the elders and the tribes of Israel.

Leviticus iv. This gives God's ordinance of the sin-offering. An individual identified himself

with his offering by laying his hand on its head (Lev. iv. 4, 24, 29). If an offering were required for the whole congregation, how could nearly two millions of people lay their hands on the head of one bullock? It was provided that the elders of the congregation should lay their hands on its head, and thus in this most solemn ordinance the elders were constituted representatives of the whole congregation, to which they also belonged.

2 Chron. v. 2. Here the elders of Israel and heads of the tribes are associated with the king in the highest national function of the kingdom. And in the corresponding chapter (1 Kings viii. 1) the description shows the elders "assembled" around the king.

And now the word "elder" has begun to tell us of representatives of the twelve tribes associated with the King. Dignitaries of the kingdom surrounding His person, and called into the very presence of God.

Tracing onward into the New Testament, we find again and again the elders, chief priests and scribes as the leaders of Israel (Matt. xv. 2; xvi. 21; Acts vi. 12). Leaders of the nation, but not subject to God, nor loyal to Christ. These elders are specially named among those foretold by King David as gathered together against Jehovah and against His Christ (Acts iv. 5, and 25, 26; Ps. ii. 2). The last mention of them is in Acts xxv. 15. They are still against God and

against His Christ, and consequently against His servants.

Now the interest deepens. In Acts xi. 30, we read of elders who had no position in the nation of Israel, elders of another order entirely—elders of the Church of Christ. In Acts xv. 2, they are associated with the apostles; and now apostles and elders supersede the national elders in all the rest of the Bible records (Acts xv. 4, 6, 22, 23; xvi. 4, etc.).

Numerous are the references to these elders of the churches, both in Acts and in the Epistles.

Peter calls himself a fellow-elder (1 Pet. v. 1, R.V.). For the apostles were the chief elders of the Church; and the last of the apostles, after all the rest had passed away, twice calls himself "the elder" (2 John 1; 3 John 1). The last surviving apostle elder.

Again, there are the elders who obtained a good report by faith (Heb. xi.). These are traced back to Abel, Enoch, and Noah—men called of God before Israel's chosen race began, yet included together with those who were of Israel, as men of faith, citizens of a heavenly country.

One more book remains; and from Rev. iv. 4 to xix. 4, elders are seen throughout. They are not elders of Israel, nor of churches on earth, but elders of the heavenly court. And now as we gather up the threads running through the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, we can see who the elders are. They are men, they are repre-

sentative men ; they appear for themselves and many more besides ; they represent the people of God before Christ came; and also the people of God since Jesus died and rose again.

The blessing of God to men ran chiefly through Israel in the former times, and they are represented in the heads of the twelve tribes. His blessing to men in later days flows, through the twelve apostles of the Lamb, to those who believe on Him through their word (John xvii. 20).

Together they are the symbolic

TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS,

associates of the King, surrounding His person, in the presence of the heavenly Majesty: representing all the blest among men from Adam to the translation, when Jesus came to receive to Himself His own at the meeting-place in the clouds. The faith they had on earth is replaced by sight in glory. This vast company is, we believe, "*the heavenly calling*" named in Hebrews iii. 1, to which all belong who, by the grace of God, in every age, have been called to heaven.

As we note further in the Revelation, the elders who surround the throne have in the midst of them, as well as in the midst of the throne, the Lamb as it had been slain. And they in turn are surrounded by the angelic hosts (v. 11 ; vii. 11). They unite with the Seraphim in the worship of the Lamb of God ; are admitted into the Divine counsels, which they can unfold to others (v. 5 ; vii. 13-17).

Such is the glorious predestination of those who

in these passing days hear the saving name of Jesus, and put their trust in Him. Their inheritance and home is in the Father's house; but their royal estate is to be seen in the public revelation of the Divine and sovereign Majesty of God and their glorified Redeemer. In the glory of this scene they are manifested as

KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD

(Rev. i. 6). Surely no faithfulness or service, however devoted, could constitute a claim to a position so transcendent.

The elders are all crowned alike. This at once tells us their crowns of gold are all grace-given and unearned; for if faithfulness or service were required to win them, they would greatly differ among the twenty-four. Other crowns distinct from these will be given as rewards of service. We shall read of these later on, when we contemplate the judgment-seat of Christ. In the precincts of the throne, among the Seraphim and elders, we find no trace whatever of a judgment of saints.

It is remote from this great throne-scene of the universe. Glorified men owe their heavenly state to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as essentially as their home with the Father; for the God of all grace calls us by Christ Jesus to His eternal glory (1 Peter v. 10).

After the first mention of the Throne of God in heaven (Rev. iv. 2, 3) and Him that sits thereon, the description of the dazzling glory of the scene

proceeds with the surrounding circle of the Elders, and then with the Seraphim, in their yet nearer position, as it were custodians of the holiness of the Throne itself, a smaller and innermost circle, yet closer than the Elders' circle to God Himself. And now in Rev. v. we read of the Right Hand of Him that sat on the Throne, and a Book that is held therein.

When the seventy elders of Israel were called up into Mount Sinai, we are told how "they saw the God of Israel" (Exod. xxiv. 10), and the paved work of a sapphire stone under His feet. Again, after this, Moses rehearses these events, and reminds the people that they "saw no similitude" (Deut. iv. 12, 15), lest they should attempt to make a representation of His form, or even describe Him who dwells in unapproachable light, which no man hath seen, nor can see (1 Tim. vi. 16).

Even Moses was told he could not see His face, for no man shall see Him and live (Exod. xxxiii. 20). Nevertheless, there are references indicating an unseen original, to which, in some mysterious way, the human form is likened (Gen. i. 26). "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." There is a face, although not to be seen. A hand that holds a book, a right hand which implies a left, and feet upon the sapphire pavement. Still there is no similitude to be seen of Him that is seated on the throne of God. But there is an image of the invisible God (Col. i. 15).

God manifest, who is the visible Centre of the displayed glory of God. A proclamation by a strong angel demands throughout heaven, "Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof?" When this brings out the fact that no creature in heaven, nor in earth, nor under the earth, is able to open the book, nor even to look thereon, then appears on the scene One who only is worthy—One beyond compare. He is seen in the midst of the throne, in the midst of the Seraphim, in the midst of the Elders, a Lamb as it had been slain. The personal monument of His own redeeming grace; Accomplisher of the atonement. He is seen in the plenitude of power —Almighty, Universal, Eternal. According to His own Word, "All power is given unto Me" (Matt. xxviii. 18), so He is symbolised here by the seven horns; seen also in all the manifested *fulness of the Spirit of God.*

HE CAME AND TOOK THE BOOK.

No one else could, no one else was worthy. What is this book? Its opening later reveals its nature. It is the final mandate of God for the restitution of all things; to make an end of sins, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to mete out eternal judgment in execution upon sinful angels and men, and to establish the kingdom of God, first on this earth, and next in new heavens and a new earth. No wonder that no created being could open or even look upon that book. We rejoice to know of One who can; even He for whom all

things were made. He comes into view, claims the book as by right of an overcomer (Rev. iii. 21). He *prevails* to open the book. He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne. With that book is given the administration of the universe. The Man cast out of His rightful inheritance on earth, despised and rejected of men, has come to the far country, and has received for Himself the kingdom (see Luke xix. 12) at the hands of His Father.

3.—THE CHOIR OF THE REDEEMED.

The taking of the book is the signal for the outburst of worship. The pent-up hearts around the throne can restrain themselves no more; seraphim and elders fall in homage at His feet, and the eternal anthem begins.

THE NEW SONG.

"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain." The only One worthy to administer the purposes of God in heaven, earth, and hell is the One that was slain; and the saved out of the human race are redeemed unto God by His blood. Here let us note that His accomplished atonement is put forward as one of the grounds of His worthiness to reign as Universal Sovereign Lord; and this atonement, or the being redeemed to God by His blood, is the only means by which any of the human race can be found in that heavenly scene. It is the same in the case of the innumerable

multitude on the sea of glass (Rev. vii. 9, 14, 15). "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne of God. . . ."

Again, the 144,000 in Rev. xiv. 4. They are *redeemed* from among men. And in Rev. xxii. 14 R.V., we read, "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

The way of the Tree of Life, barred against Adam in his sin, is opened by the blood of the Lamb, to him and to all his race. Abel's sacrifice, by which he, being dead, yet speaketh, tells the same changeless story. From Genesis to Revelation, by the blood of the Lamb have we access to God. "Neither is there salvation in any other." Let us trust in the God of all grace and the love that gave Jesus to die for our sins, and never countenance the falsehood of Satan, who deceives so many, to trust in God's kindness without an atonement. Apart from the precious blood foreordained before the foundation of the world, sinful men will find judgment without mercy, instead of the kindness they fondly dream of. "God so loved the world, that *He gave His only-begotten Son*" is eternal truth, for eternal ages, which will satisfy the perfected intelligence and hold the affections of beings heavenly and earthly, whether those in their unfallen created perfection, or those of redeemed humanity, when all

cavil and opposition to God shall have been long forgotten.

THE REDEEMER AND THE REDEEMED.

This explains also a wonderful fact, why the elders, the redeemed from among men, should occupy this inner circle, nearer the throne than the angels, those unfallen heavenly hosts. What can they think? that they should open their ranks so that redeemed men may enter into these reserved seats or thrones of glory. All in heaven will consent that the redeemed should be nearest to their Redeemer. And by this, again, we learn how the blessings of redemption exceed those of creation.

MEMORIAL OF THE CROSS.

In the 24th of Luke, the risen Lord Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples in two different ways. Those whose eyes had been holden so that they knew Him not, even while He talked with them by the way, and opened to them the Scriptures, told the others afterwards how He was made known to them in breaking of bread (Luke xxiv. 35). Later on He made Himself known to the full company by showing the marks of His crucifixion in His hands and feet (ver. 39). In like manner He has been revealed in a special way to His people during their journeys through the many centuries they have lived in this earth, in the memorial of His Supper. After that, in the heavenly glory, being seen as a Lamb as it had been slain, there will be maintained in the

hearts of all who see Him a perpetual memorial of His cross. Both the temporal and eternal memorials were shadowed forth in those resurrection scenes (Luke xxiv.).

JESUS IS GOD.

In Revelation iv., the elders worship Him that sat on the throne. The same Divine honours are rendered to the Lamb of God, who is Jesus (John i. 29); so that this also comes within the word that is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. iv. 10). And those who lead in this worship of the Lamb of God in heaven are, the seraphim and elders (Rev. v. 8).

HARPS OF GOLD.

Notice what the elders possess, "Having every one of them harps." This indicates that they are endowed with gifts of music.

It seems from the mysterious words of Ezekiel (xxviii. 13), "The workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub," that the power of music was once possessed by that fallen cherub, now known as Satan. We know how God found delight in the music of His people from the Psalms, and how extensively it was developed; and these harps of gold tell us that music will again be rendered in worship to God in the heavenly choir. There are also

"GOLDEN VIALS

full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."

If the vial is of precious gold, we infer the odours contained therein are more precious still. And thus these precious odours are held in memorial before God by the heavenly elders. The prayers must be those of saints still on earth (Matt. xviii. 19); they come up for a memorial before God (Acts x. 4): and here we learn it is one of the functions of this royal priesthood to be "the Lord's remembrancers" in the heavenly courts (Isa. lxii. 6, marg.). So the elders are to enter upon an office which is now being maintained for us, while we live on earth, by our Great High Priest, who ever liveth to make intercession for us (Heb. vii. 25). As we learn that this is to be one of our heavenly duties by-and-bye, it will be good to practise here and now the service of intercession. We get a letter from a friend, answer it at once, and put it away among many such answered letters, and some of us often forget it. But here is one which cannot be answered at once; perhaps some business must be done first, which takes time. This unanswered letter must be placed well in view, and be kept constantly in mind, and it keeps the writer more closely in our heart, perhaps, than the answered letter did.

Suppose one had a very large correspondence, and some specially intimate friend comes to help, and looks over all the letters constantly, and is so closely one's friend that everything is in common; and this kind helper brings forward a letter, and says, "Here is one that can be answered to-day;

everything is now ready." That would be a very real service, and be a matter of very intimate fellowship between the friends.

We do not suppose that God forgets, nor that He needs such help, but He does love fellow-workers, and such fellowship with those He takes into His counsels and His confidence. So we can anticipate with joy such interests in His concerns, and have more pleasure in the odours, the prayers of saints, and in the vials, which are soon to be in the official possession of God's remembrancers.

THE LAMB IN THE MIDST.

There in the midst of the throne is Jesus, the Lamb of God. All whose eyes can see the scars on His hands and feet, have their hearts filled with overwhelming consciousness of His cross.

The victory He won in that dread encounter with all the powers of darkness, sin and death, is held in eternal remembrance—a victory which changed the destiny of the human race. But for that cross and victory, Adam's race was wholly lost; now there are in that very glory multitudes that no man can number, saved for eternity. The sight of Him calls forth the new song. Around the throne of God seraphim and elders sing in one united choir, "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain." They sing the *Redeemer's* praise.

But it is a *new song!* Is it not nineteen centuries old on earth? has it not been sung by saints all down the ages since they were first

filled with the Spirit? (Acts ii. 4; and Eph. v. 18, 19.) It may be old on earth, although never time-worn; and yet it is new in heaven.

How can it be sung there until the calling to heaven is completed; until the elders encircle the throne in their appointed place, and have their crowns, and their harps, and golden vials?

And so heaven is waiting till the twenty-four thrones shall be filled, until the number of the heavenly calling shall be gathered in, and meanwhile the heirs of God await the coming of the Lord to enter upon their inheritance in light.

THE SONG AND THE CHORUS.

As the new song rises to the throne of God and of the Lamb, and rolls away through the heavens, the chorus is taken up by the angelic myriads, the loud voice of praise resounding: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. v. 12).

The tide of the angel song rolls on through universal space, and is answered back by every creature in the whole creation of God; all in heaven, earth, under the earth, and in the sea: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (ver. 13).

HEAVEN OR THE WORLD.

As we rise in the happy expectancy of faith and hope, to Jesus in this atmosphere of joy and universal praise, and then look down over this world

as it is to-day, how depressing and dull it is, in its dead monotony of ignorance, gloom, discontent, and vexation of spirit. No joy in God, nor even in self, nor in others, nor in anything. What lives are spent in the exhalations of minds alienated from the life of God (Eph. iv. 17-19). The only earth-light is an occasional flash of some great intellect, and while men are extolling the illumination it gives, it goes out, like the will-o'-the-wisp of a treacherous swamp. In Rev. iv. and v. we are lifted up above the swamp and fog, beyond the mists and clouds, into the perpetual sunshine of the love of God and of His Christ. We can see light in the light of His glorious face; we see the vision of God in Christ, and we can foresee ourselves as we shall be in His presence. Life will be lived as He wills, who creates hearts to enjoy, and supplies of His fulness to be enjoyed.

The peace which passeth all understanding is here fathomless and boundless, for the soul lives in the home of the God of peace.

The heart is satisfied with love, the love of God in Christ. Intelligence will for ever expand as it basks in the wisdom and knowledge of God perpetually being revealed.

Vigorous youth, and strength unknown to mortals, will find freedom and indescribable gladness in the service of Him whose good pleasure is the prize for which life is valued. Here the fruit of the Spirit will ever be blossoming and coming to maturity in love, joy, and peace.

The god of this world made the deep mire of this world's sin. The true and living God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, designs, creates, upholds, and keeps the realms above in purity and brightness, and perpetuates the happiness of those therein, who gladly sing, "Thou art worthy; Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.'

"Unto Him that loveth us, and hath loosed us from our sins by His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. i. 5, 6).

CHAPTER VI.

THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST.

E have previously been considering the successive heavenly scenes, unfolded in prophecy, and to which we are hastening. The scene of love and exceeding joy in the presentation to the Father; the scene of the glory of the Lamb, in the midst of the Throne, in the midst of the Seraphim, and in the midst of the elders; the scene of worship, loving adoration, and praise in the heavenly choir: and now we come to a scene as solemn as those were joyous; foretold with equal certainty; even the Judgment-seat of Christ.

As in the pruning of the vine branches in John xv., the comfort is, "My Father is the Husbandman," so here the comfort lies in this: it is the Judgment-seat of *Christ*, and He is ever the same Jesus.

Neither time nor place, neither circumstance nor occasion, can ever change His love, which is stronger than death. In whatsoever scenes or surroundings: in the midst of disciples, as at Bethany, or Emmaus, in the depths to which He went to save us, or enthroned in glory: nothing

can alter His affection, nor "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 39).

In order to understand the nature and character of the Judgment-seat of Christ, we must carefully distinguish it from His

JUDGMENT-THRONES

of the living, and the dead. At these two thrones the ungodly are judged (Jude 15).

We read that Jesus is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead (Acts x. 42); also that He will judge the quick and the dead, at His appearing and kingdom (2 Tim. iv. 1); and again it is written He is ready to do it (1 Pet. iv. 5).

The Lord Jesus Himself gives a detailed description of the judgment of the living in Matt. xxv. 31 to end. It is to be when the Son of Man shall come in His glory, . . . and then shall He sit on

THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY.

Before Him shall be gathered all nations; this shows it is nations living on earth at the time, and how universal is the gathering to judgment. The separating of His loyal people from the rejecters of His sovereignty is described; and also that the judgment takes each person in his own special attitude towards Himself. All nations are brought up, but each person is made to answer for himself.

This is the judgment of the quick, or the living, and those that are condemned are consigned with-

out dying to the everlasting fire. This judgment takes place when the Son of Man comes in His glory; and is one of the first great events at the taking of His earthly kingdom.

In Rev. xx. we read of His reign for one thousand years (vers. 2, 3, 4, 6), and at the end of the thousand years a great rebellion is to take place (7, 8, 9). The rebels will be devoured by fire from heaven. Then a

GREAT WHITE THRONE

appears. The earth and heaven flee away, and a judgment of the *dead* takes place. Four times the dead are named in verses 12 and 13. This is evidently the throne of judgment for the dead; separated by a thousand years from the throne of judgment for the living.

The Lord tells us that His Father has committed all judgment to Him, and given Him authority to execute judgment (John v. 22, 27), and immediately He assures His people that "He that heareth His Word, and believeth on Him that sent Him hath everlasting life, and *shall not come into judgment.*"

The Scripture record of this word of Jesus is a writ of discharge from the Judge of quick and dead, exempting the believer absolutely from ever being called before either of these two judgment thrones. This is a great and comforting assurance to the believer in God, and the Word He has written. With John v. 24 in his hand he knows that he holds the warrant of the Judge Himself,

discharging him for ever from these judgments, or from either of them. He holds the very handwriting of the Judge Himself, sealed with His seal, witnessed and delivered to him by the Holy Spirit of God; and so he can rest assured of exemption from judgment as a sinner, and of deliverance from the wrath to come (1 Thess. i. 10). Learned men, who say the Scripture may contain what is true, but the written words cannot be taken as God's words, are here at a grievous disadvantage. They do not know there is a writ of discharge for them; they cannot recognise the handwriting, nor the seal of God, and the attestation of the Spirit is to them illegible. Consequently, when the conviction of impending judgment oppresses them, they sink in a morass of doubt. Nothing we shall have to learn respecting the judgment-seat of Christ in any way alters or modifies this great declaration, "Shall not come into the judgment" (John v. 24).

When the Spirit of God writes about the judgment of sinners, He uses the expression *Throne* as the place of judgment, and when He speaks of the judgment of God's people, He uses another word entirely, which in our Bibles is translated *judgment-seat.* This alone keeps the different scenes quite distinct. Into the judgment of the quick and dead we who believe shall never come (John v. 24). Before the judgment-seat of Christ we must all stand (Rom. xiv. 10). Every one of us shall give account to God (Rom. xiv. 12).

THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST

is only mentioned twice—viz., in Rom. xiv. 10 and 2 Cor. v. 16. The first passage says we shall *all* stand there; that is, Paul the servant and Apostle of Christ, through whom the epistle is written, and also the beloved of God, saints by the calling of God (Rom. i. 7). This makes it clear it is a judgment of saints, not sinners, that is spoken of; even of a people who, whether living or dying, are the Lord's (Rom. xiv. 8).

In 2 Cor. v. the subject is more fully unfolded. That chapter begins with the confidence God establishes in the hearts of His people. Though the judgment is solemn, it is not to terrify the subjects of God's present grace and promised future blessing.

Although we have a body which is liable to suffering, sorrow, and pain, and which often groans under its burdens, we are certainly promised a glorified body in which such things will be known no more. For this glorified state God has wrought us (ver. 6); and as a witness and earnest of this great promise, God gives us His Holy Spirit. The effect of this truth in the heart that apprehends it, and entertains it, is to make him grateful, and he is so won by the love of Christ, that love constrains him to live for Christ, and not for self; and the object of life before the soul is the desire to please the Lord (ver. 9). "We make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to Him." Immediately we are turned to the contem-

plation of that great occasion when all shall receive from the Lord, and in His presence, the things done in our lifetime in this present body, whether good or bad. Good things to receive His reward, bad things His marked disapproval (2 Cor. v. 10).

This is not merely a theological doctrine, but it is a positive statement of a coming fact.

WE MUST ALL APPEAR.

The word translated "appear" should read "be manifested." All of us in this room appear here, but we are *not manifested here.* We know but very little of ourselves, or of others, but in the presence of the light of God at the judgment-seat of Christ every covering will be transparent, everything will be manifested as it really is; and the review of our works done in the body will show everything in its true colour, as it is seen by the eye of God.

Further light is given on this in 1 Cor. iii., and we learn that Jesus Christ is presented as a foundation, and that we have to build on Him, as a building is erected after the foundation for it is laid.

Eph. ii. 5 shows that we are saved entirely, and for ever, by God's grace, saving us through Christ only. Salvation is of grace (ver. 8), and not of works (ver. 9). This lays the foundation. The next verse, 10, says we are created in Christ Jesus *unto good works* which God before ordained that we should walk in them.

Referring to this truth, and comparing it with 1 Cor. iii., it teaches that the foundation is Christ, in whom God saves us unconditionally; but having saved us for ever, He has ordained that we should walk in good works to His praise and glory. These good works are to be built on the foundation. Consequently, if a person seeks salvation by his good works, or through Christ partly, and partly by his own works, or by his religious observances, or anything else than that Christ died for his sins and rose again, that person is not building on the one foundation God has laid down; but tries to substitute another foundation, other than that is laid (comp. 1 Cor. iii. 11); such other foundation will prove to be sand, and lead to ruin (Matt. vii. 26; Luke vi. 49).

But the man who believes in Christ alone for the saving of his soul, and so is on the rock foundation—how is he building? how is he fulfilling day by day the good works which God ordained he should walk in? It is just this very question that has to be decided at the judgment-seat of Christ, and 1 Cor. iii. likens these works to building materials of various kinds, and tells us all these materials will be submitted to a test by fire. If they are of such inflammable nature as wood, hay, and stubble, the fire will burn them up; but if indestructible by fire, such as gold, silver, and costly stones, the test will prove their quality, and *the day shall declare it*—that is the day of the judgment-seat of Christ.

What, then, are such works as will be classed as

WOOD, HAY, AND STUBBLE?

All that are wrought in the will, energy, skill, religion, or anything else of the natural man, however beautiful, admirable, and praiseworthy they may be in the eyes of men. How beautiful is the appearance of some wood, when of finest quality, and highly wrought and polished; but does the quality or polish enable it to stand fire? So all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in His sight (Isa. lxiv. 6). What can be done with them better than to burn them up? The sight of them in the light of His presence, which makes manifest their nature, will make the owners of them thankful they are burned up, so that no vestige of them may remain.

But what loss to the worker? Loss of time, of opportunity, which should have been redeemed (Eph. v. 16). It means also loss of reward. It seems the chief purpose for which the session is held is that the Lord may give rewards for the services that please Him; wherefore to lose reward will be great loss, though the worker himself be saved (1 Cor. iii. 14, 15).

The fiery test, according to 1 Cor. iii., is to determine every work, of *what sort* it is (ver. 13). How shall we know the works that will be classed as

GOLD, SILVER, AND COSTLY STONES?

Certainly they will be those which God before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. ii. 10);

consequently, although the sort will be the same in the case of all who are credited with them, the actual works will differ so much in each person's case, that copying each other will only lead to wood, hay, and stubble. Each one must walk in the works foreordained for him to do.

Who, then, is to tell each one what this is? Evidently the only One who knows—even He who foreordained them. So we must walk with Him—in fellowship with Him, in order to know what part of His works are ordained for us.

If *I* say, "What shall this man do?" He answers, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

Again, the gold, silver, and costly stones will be works that God has wrought in us (Isa. xxvi. 12). The Spirit of God, given to each child of God, is fully able to make him know what God desires him to do day by day. He will make him know with certainty, if *his will is wholly subjected to God.*

Not only will the Holy Spirit tell us what to do, but He will work it in us, and accomplish it by us. He will work in us both to will and to do God's good pleasure (Phil. ii. 13). Moreover, He will perfect us in every good work to do His will, and work in us that which is well pleasing in God's sight through Jesus Christ (Heb. xiii. 21). We need hardly search further to know how to work these works, of gold, silver, and costly stones. After all, they are the Spirit's works in

us, the effects of His will, energy, skill and power acting in our being, and doing the will of God.

Will this be done? Yes, but so far only as we are

YIELDED TO GOD;

and our members, too, as instruments of righteousness (Rom. vi. 13). If, then, we really desire to live so as to please God, making that our aim (2 Cor. v. 9, R.V.), and exercise our faith in God that He will make good in us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. i. 3), and if we will give diligence to His Word with our whole heart, constrained by the love of Christ, then the Holy Spirit will work God's work through our members, and every act will abide precious in His sight, a fruit of the Spirit of Christ, a reproduction of the works and ways and words of Jesus, Who is living again in our mortal flesh by His Spirit-presence, the Holy Ghost (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11).

But if we rely on our own effort, will, resolution, strength, or on men's doctrines, schools or training, we shall as certainly bring up piles of wood, hay and stubble to be burnt to ashes.

This judgment-seat of Christ will make manifest the results or failures of our life and service, showing how the cause of Christ in the world has been affected by us. If opportunities have been bought up (Eph. v. 16), it will be shown then to what extent, and also what opportunities have been lost.

How graciously God deals with a sinner, the Lord describes in the story of the prodigal son.

The father runs to meet him, kisses him much, which tells of forgiveness according to the riches of His grace. Then the best robe, the ring, the shoes, are provided to fit him for his place at home, and the gladness of the scene tells out the love that welcomes the lost one who is found. Nevertheless all the time spent in the far country is lost opportunity that can bring no loving approval nor reward.

The Lord has given us many words of gracious warning which we need to heed. How He urges us to see that every wrong done to our fellow-man is confessed, and righted if possible (Matt. v. 23, 24). If we do not seek reconciliation, nor make amends in this life, we may be sure the matter at issue will be brought up, so as to be put right at the judgment-seat. Have we cherished ill-will against a brother? The Judge standeth before the door (Jas. v. 9).

How often have God's people been unjustly condemned! Perhaps they have committed their cause to Him that judgeth righteously. They may have passed away unrequited and misjudged. Their cause will be vindicated before the judgment-seat, and the unjust judgment condemned and reversed. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. xii. 19). Has this repayment

been made always in this life? If not, it will be done at the judgment-seat. We are not supposing that the one who is wronged seeks vindication, but we are sure God will keep His word.

Pastors will give account of the Lord's flock entrusted to their care. The order stands, "Feed the flock of God which is among you." It is scarcely likely to please the Master if only a few selected sheep marked with some under-shepherd's brand have been fed, and other of His sheep left to wander or starve.

Stewards will render a full account of the Master's goods entrusted to their care to use for His work and His people. On the other hand, how many unknown, little esteemed, but loving services to the Master will be brought to light, and their true value in His eyes made manifest. What joy to the worker will spring up under His smile of approval and word of loving appreciation?

JUDGMENT OF SERVICE.

Someone may plead, But if all my sins are forgiven, as the Gospel assures me, through the blood of Christ, how can all these questions be raised again? It is well to ask it, but the answer is plain: The judgment is not set up to judge men for their sins, but to take account of the servants of Christ and of their services to Him. Between Master and servant good service must be approved, and bad service disapproved.

Also, as we have seen, wrongs to fellow-men unrequited must be put straight, and not left

unnoticed to be unsettled for eternity. The best way is to get all outstanding accounts settled up as quickly as possible. But, apart from all explanations, the fact is absolute : " We must all be manifested at the judgment-seat of Christ, and receive the things done in our body, whether good or bad."

REWARDS OF SERVICE.

If the judgment is of works or service, it is equally certain that good, loving, faithful service will be rewarded. And this again is grace, for the Lord has said we ought to say after all has been done that can be done, we have only done our duty (Luke xvii. 10).

But He promises rewards again and again. And if we only consider His Word about it, we shall see that every reward suggested is a prize of a value inconceivable by us at present, and can only be appreciated at the time and place of the judgment-seat. A simple method of understanding this is to reflect, that a Master's gift, as a mark of His appreciation of service which pleases Him, will be valued in the exact proportion with which the Master Himself is loved and honoured and respected. The more He is loved, honoured, and esteemed, the more His approval will be prized and valued.

Among the elders who have obtained a good report Moses takes a prominent position as a servant (Num. xii. 6-8), and when recounting his faith and faithfulness to God, and godly choice,

the Spirit adds, "For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. xi. 26). The same chapter affirms in verse six that it is impossible to please God unless one believes that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

PROMISED REWARDS—CROWNS.

There are different kinds of crowns promised by the Lord, which He offers as rewards for faithfulness in the various departments of His service.

We must distinguish these from the crowns worn by the twenty-four elders described in Rev. iv. The elders are all crowned alike, which is sufficient to show us they are not won by any faithfulness of theirs, but are given them by grace alone.

No one could by any means earn an appointment as a king and priest unto God. The crowns of the elders mark the royal estate of those who have been called, by the God of all grace, unto His eternal glory, by Christ Jesus (1 Pet. v. 10).

But there are other crowns to be awarded as prizes for distinguished service. These are of five kinds—viz., Crown of Righteousness, Crown of Life, Incorruptible Crown, Crown of Rejoicing, Crown of Glory. The conditions of award differ in each.

CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (2 Tim. iv. 8).

Paul walked so closely in communion with his Lord that he knew when the time of his departure was at hand. He could say, "I have fought a

good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."

Long before this he had written to the Thessalonians: "*We* which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, . . ." No one may alter those inspired words, which put into the lips of every child of God the expectation that is intended to garrison his heart and form his life.

It was not inconsistent with this general expectation and hope of the Church, that this aged servant should know that his own course was finished; and he well knew a Crown of Righteousness awaited him, was laid up for him, and the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give it him at the day of His Judgment Seat.

And should not we count on a like gift? Paul's life is given as an example of one living in the Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit's Presence, yielded to day by day, that made Paul what he was, from beginning to end of his course. And he adds the words of encouragement to all that follow in the race.

The Crown of Righteousness will be given also to all them that love His appearing. The more our hearts are occupied with Himself, and His great love to us; with what He has done, and yet will do for us, the more the love-bond of relationship with Him will strengthen, the more we shall live with Him in the Spirit, and enjoy His love; it will then follow as a matter of course that our love for Him will deepen, and we shall so much

the more love and long for His appearing. Is it not gracious of our Lord to love us so much as to care for our love to Him, and to delight in the welcome our hearts are keeping for Him, against He comes? And the crown He gives will mark the pleasure which that welcome gives Him. Rev. iii. 11. This gives the Lord's often-repeated word: "Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." *Crowns that may be won, can be lost.*

CROWN OF LIFE.

This is the martyr's crown (Rev. ii. 10) for faithfulness unto death. Satan is used as an instrument only, to put those who are so dear to God into prison and tribulation, that they may be tried, as gold is refined in the fire. But before the trial begins, the duration is fixed, a limit which cannot be overstepped. "Thou shalt have tribulation ten days," fixes such a limit. The expression "ten days" we take symbolically, but it clearly marks a limit to all trial of faith, fixed by the One who loves us best. What a comfort to us to know, as we come to any trial in our lives, that it is allowed, that it may work out the good purpose of His will in us, and that the limit is fixed by the same love. And His word is, "Be thou faithful." If it be unto death, I will give thee a Crown of Life.

Every one who has died for His name's sake, will be recognised by the martyr's crown they will wear by-and-bye. It seems as if the Lord extends

the conditions for this crown, in James i. 12, for enduring trial, out of love to Him.

INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN (1 Cor. ix. 25).

This chapter is a treatise on the Lord's service; and how the servant is to keep himself in good form for efficient service. He must set himself in what he does, to do it with all his might; and in every service, to do it heartily as to the Lord The servant feels the importance and urgency of the Lord's work; necessity is laid on him; a dispensation committed to him (vers. 16, 17). He disentangles himself from hindrances, but carries every burden the Lord gives (ver. 19); turns all means to the Lord's ends (vers. 20-23); runs the race set before him, looking unto Jesus (Heb. xii. 1, 2; 1 Cor. ix. 24). He runs for victory; never for defeat. In this race there is a prize for every runner who runs lawfully; and he takes the prize from no one else. Striving for mastery, temperate in all things, body kept under; what is all this but whole-hearted, devoted, personal service to the Lord? And He will reward it with an incorruptible crown. Not a fading crown of earthly laurels, but a mark of the Lord's good pleasure, that will make the very heavens the happier for the receiver.

CROWN OF REJOICING (1 Thess. ii. 19).

The constraining love of Christ is the moving power in every service to Him. The Person of Christ ever in his view, His Spirit warming his heart, conveying the orders, inviting his will to

run in the way of the Lord's good pleasure. This must be the motive and direction of every work for God; but here another gracious prospect is presented to encourage the worker; the sight, in the presence of Jesus, of those that have been brought to His feet.

Here is the crown for the soul-winner; vindicating the words in Prov. xi. 30, and Dan. xii. 3, for those who have laboured for Christ, and with Him, in bringing others to Him. What a multiplying of rejoicing to see the joy of Christ in those won for Him; joy also in the happiness of those so brought. Such is the reward here described for those that turn others to righteousness.

CROWN OF GLORY (1 Pet. v. 4).

This is the Shepherd's crown. Peter had learnt the love of the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. He had witnessed His sufferings unto death, and learned then how much He loved. To him the Lord had bequeathed the dearest trust that He was leaving on earth, His sheep and lambs (John xxi. 15-17). Thus he was appointed an under-shepherd, in a close relation to the Chief Shepherd. Now Peter is called to extend the charge to others, and also the promise of the crown of glory.

Perhaps this will be the most highly prized of all the crowns. It marks approval in the service nearest the heart of the Good Shepherd, feeding the flock of God; tending and caring for His sheep and lambs.

We have noted the Crown of Life promised in Rev. ii. 10. This is only one of many promised rewards in Rev. ii. and iii. These promises are made to the overcomer, in the special circumstances in which the Church is found. The Lord passes each Church under review, records His judgment of each, and promises a reward to the overcomer. A responsibility is created to hear His Word, conform to His will, and those who do so are the overcomers in each case. We should understand that the final decision and award will be made at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

PROMISED REWARDS TO OVERCOMERS.

At *Ephesus.* Rev. ii. 4: "To eat of the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God." There was much to commend in this Church, but nothing could compensate for the loss of first love. The Lord calls for a return to the first works. These are works of faith, and labours of love, serving the living and true God (1 Thess. i. 3, 9). Faith expressed in delight to do His will; constrained by His own great love. In the response of the soul to this word from Him, this promise will be most eagerly prized. Eden's Tree of Life was forfeited by disobedience.

In the Song of Songs a Tree is described, whose fruit is beyond compare. Cant. ii. 3: Such is "My Beloved." "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Here is rest, protecting shade, love, joy, and satisfying fruit.

Ps. cxix. 103 : "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth." This is the constant answer of a soul that keeps God's Word in his heart. This Psalm describes the heart in which God's Word is hid (ver. 11), and in which His Word is kept and observed, and loved exceedingly. It is the theme of the whole Psalm.

Jer. xv. 16. God's Word sought after, found, and fed upon, has become the rejoicing of my heart.

Luke x. 39. The expressive, figurative language of the Old Testament is here realised in practical life—sitting at the feet of Jesus, hearing His words; sitting down under the shadow of the Tree of Life. His words are sweet to our taste. In keeping of these words there is great reward (Ps. xix. 11). Keeping His testimonies, seeking Him with an undivided heart, they do no iniquity, they walk in His ways (Ps. cxix. 2). The promise to the overcomer in Ephesus, then, is to have this intimate, quiet, restful, heart-satisfying communion with the Lord Jesus, like the scene at Bethany, translated into the Home of God above. It will make the blessings of the blest more blessed, and the joys of heaven more joyful, and will make the way to that happy scene happier every passing day.

At *Smyrna*. Rev. ii. 10: "I will give thee a crown of life." Overcoming in this persecuted Church is enduring to death for His Name's sake.

Many there are who will receive this crown, both in ancient and in modern days. A word of encouragement is given, to sustain in the moment of suffering, "Shall not be hurt of the second death," which carries our thoughts back to Matt. x. 28.

Pergamos. This Church comes under strong censure from the Lord, who holds the sharp two-edged sword of God's Word. The censure is because teachers of evil doings are allowed to remain there (ver. 14), and also holders of hateful doctrines (ver. 15). He has required His Churches to rid themselves of all such (1 Cor. v. 13). Those who will do this shall be overcomers here. To them is the gracious promise, to eat of the hidden manna. The manna they gathered every day lay on the face of the wilderness, all round the host; there it was in sight of all, and by no means "hidden" (Exod. xvi. 13, 14). But there was a golden vessel filled with manna, put away and hidden out of sight in the ark, to be kept as a memorial. If an Israelite, years after he had settled in Canaan, were to be given a taste of this memorial manna, would it not immediately bring back reminiscences of that long forty years in the wilderness, and remembrances of God's gracious leading, and feeding, and preserving? It is not, then, difficult to interpret this promise. The same ark that kept God's Word within it, also kept the memorial of the portion God gave His people in the wilderness journey.

If we shall remember hereafter all His ways of love to us—He remembers, too,—the converse with Him, in the glory, over the bygone days when He made Himself known in His love, and nearness, and sustaining grace, in times of difficulty and trial, will make sweet reminiscences of days of communion on the way.

The more communion with the Lord that we now enjoy, in the practical details of our daily life, the more there will be of community of heart between the Lord and His saints, and the more appreciation of the memorials of Himself known and enjoyed in this life. But communion is cut off if we keep in association with such as the Lord here refers to. Hence the promise is to the overcomer, in the Pergamos condition, and will be appreciated accordingly.

Note the taste of the manna was sweet (Exod. xvi. 31) like honey; so is Christ to those who feed on Him, the living Bread of John vi. 51. This is the manna chapter of the New Testament, and the words Jesus speaks are spirit and life. Manna also tastes like fresh oil (Num. xi. 8). It is the Holy Spirit who makes us enjoy the freshness of Christ day by day, so that we may enjoy His fulness in glory. The promise of the white stone, in which a new name is written, seems to show that the Lord will give His people, each one, a new name never heard before.

Thyatira. This Church also is censured because it suffers or allows the evil doings of

Jezebel. She was the murderess who ruled the king. Since Thyatira days a Power, calling itself the Church of Christ, has sought to reign over the kings of the earth (Rev. xvii. 18). Overcomers have suffered at the hands of this malignant power; but while she seeks to rule over kings, the Lord will give the overcomers power over the nations, and they shall rule in association with Him (Rev. ii. 27; xix. 15).

Sardis. Here is the example of a very cold and dead Church. A few names *even in Sardis* convey much reprehension. Still there are overcomers. Church members are specially urged to watchfulness in view of the Lord's return. But this warning of His sudden, unexpected coming, terrifying in character, is not applied to the children of God. The Thessalonians are told that the day of the Lord is coming as a thief in the night (1 Thess. v. 2), and that there will be no escape for those so overtaken; "but ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. v. 4). This shows the Sardis Church has in it nominal, worldly professors, who are solemnly warned of impending judgment. But the overcomers have not defiled themselves with the worldliness of Sardis. "They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." The overcomer shall be clothed in white raiment; this connects them with the elders enthroned around the throne of God (Rev. iv. 4).

Philadelphia. Like the Church at Smyrna, the

Lord records no blame to this one. They have a little strength, have kept God's Word, and have not denied His name. In Matt. x. 32 the Lord says, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men." Not to deny, is weaker than to confess. But while it showed only a little strength, there was faithfulness to His Word and His name, and there was keeping the Word of His patience — the patient waiting for Christ (2 Thess. iii. 5). No doubt this is what is called "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus" (1 Thess. i. 3).

The Lord waits in patience to meet His people, and, as we wait for Him to come for us, we are in a communion of patience. John calls it com panionship in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. The Lord makes this the occasion of His promise to keep His Church out of the hour of trial, which is to try them that dwell on the earth. His speedy coming will effect this deliverance (Rev. iii. 11). Keeping this attitude of loving expectancy towards Him will prevent the loss of the Crown of Righteousness, given for loving His appearing (2 Tim. iv. 8). These words of promise are for the Church.

Now for the overcomer, who continues faithful to the Lord: He will make him, although one of these with little strength, a pillar in the temple of his God. What a position of honour and nearness to Himself! A pillar is the support of a structure. It is used figuratively for supporting strength. Peter, James,

and John were so called pillars of the Church in Jerusalem. We can form a little idea from this how the Lord will honour these faithful men in the heavenly sanctuary. The Lord even extends their place of dignity and honour into the new creation scene—"the city of my God, the New Jerusalem."

Laodicea. This Church grieves the Lord by its indifference, regardless of His Word and the honour of His name. It has great pretensions, boasts of prosperity, progress, and is great in this world's estimation, but is abject in its spiritual poverty, blindness, and culpable wretchedness. Yet still the gracious Lord counsels and offers all that is needed for recovery, and still chastens in loving desire for restoration.

"If any man hear My voice, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me." Could grace go further? At last He will take out of it every overcomer, every true believer; and all that remains of Laodicea He will cast off and disown. What a warning for those who profess a religion of Christ, who live on under His name, regardless of God and the atonement, and are still unregenerate! The Lord will

SUDDENLY CATCH AWAY

from their midst all who are born of the Spirit; and to the rest will say, "I know you not" (Matt. xxv. 9-12). How the Gospel words should be in the continual proclamation of God's witnesses in the world: "Buy without money" (Isa. lv. 1);

"Buy for yourselves" (Matt. xxv. 9); "Buy of Me" (Rev. iii. 18). How many Churches will open their doors and carry on their services the Sunday after the children of God are caught up to meet the Lord in the air? Perhaps the consternation of the preceding days will cause these places to be crowded to a degree never seen before, and the formal ritual will be overborne by the despairing prayers, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." The overcomer saved out of this last and cast-off Church is promised the position of highest honour and dignity. As the churches decline, the rewards to overcomers increase in greatness.

The next chapter of Revelation opens with the elders enthroned around the heavenly throne, sitting with the Lord.

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There are rewards of loving, private blessing and joy, as those of Ephesus and Pergamos, and rewards of public dignity, honour, and glory, like Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. There are rewards in heaven like these, and rewards for earth like ruling over cities (Luke xix. 17-19), and over many things (properties), like Matt. xxv. 21, 23. But there is a reward for good and faithful service which surpasses all of these, and that it is, "Enter thou into the joy of thy

Lord" (Matt. xxv. 21, 23). Here the most capable servant has no precedence over the least capable; it is the faithfulness that is approved. If only hearts are true to Christ, God is well pleased, and the rewards are sure. Hence the Judgment Seat of Christ is the culminating point, whither all lines of service and responsibility must converge.

From thence will doubtless begin again new commissions of service for beloved, proved, and trusted servants—fields of service to open in the Millennial reign; and on still further into the new creation, where we read again in the description of the glorious city of God: even there are servants, who serve Him, seeing His face, and bearing His name in their foreheads (Rev. xxii. 3, 4).

Contemplating, even briefly as we have done, this review of our lives and service at the Judgment Seat of Christ, our hearts are liable to despond, and think, How can we hope for commendation or reward, or be accounted overcomers? and is it not somewhat presumptuous to expect it? Was Paul presumptuous when he said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. iv. 8). And yet if he had depended, in any degree, on his own devotion, earnest intention, or love to Christ, it would have been presumption; and he would have experienced defeat, instead of victory. Again, would it not be presumption in us to hope to follow such a man of God as the Apostle Paul?

This also is answered in Phil. iii. 17, "Be ye followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."

This tells how Paul's life is an example of the life every believer should live, and can live, in the power of the Spirit.

The chapter which tells us we must all be manifested before the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. v.) is a chapter just ringing with confidence, hope, and certain expectation. Let us note it:

Ver. 1, "We know . . . we have . . ."

Ver. 5, "God hath wrought us for this; . . . He hath also given us the earnest of the Spirit."

Ver. 6, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing . . ."

Ver. 7, "We walk by faith, not by sight."

Ver. 8, "We are confident and willing . . ."

Ver. 9, "We make it our aim to be well-pleasing to Him" (R.V.).

Ver. 10, "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ." "*We must.*"

In view of this, we reckon that if we please Him now, we shall certainly be pleasing to Him then. God hath wrought us on purpose to fulfil in us His will. But can His purpose be fulfilled in me? Yes, and the secret lies in this, He has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

What is He given for? Just to work in us to will and to do *His good pleasure* (Phil. ii. 13). The Holy Spirit comes into us to captivate our will for God; and He works to that end until we

are wholly yielded to Him. He then works in us the doing of God's good pleasure. If He wrought in us the doing of God's pleasure against our will, it would be His doing, and not ours at all. If He works in us the doing of God's pleasure, along with the loving desire of our yielded will, *then He and we do it together;* and God in His grace accounts it our work (Rev. xxii. 12), notwithstanding that after all He hath wrought all our works in us (Isa. xxvi. 12). According to 2 Cor. v., we are *willing* (8) because the Spirit wrought it in us. And we can be well-pleasing to God just to the extent that we are willing that He should work in us to do what pleases God.

Walking in the faith that comes by these very words, we are always confident, because we no longer wonder whether we can please God, but we rest assured that the Spirit of God is able to work it out in us.

The question here is narrowed down to this: Ye believe in God, ye believe also in Christ the Son of God, Do ye believe also in the Holy Ghost? For on the Holy Ghost alone depends our living so as to be approved by the Lord at His coming. The lives that will please Him are those that are Spirit-led (Rom. viii. 4), and the service that will be approved is Spirit-wrought (Phil. ii. 13). And in proportion as our faith in God the Holy Ghost is active, so shall we have confidence, even in view of the Judgment Seat of Christ. We can see then how seriously our posi-

tion at that day will be prejudiced by grieving the Spirit (Eph. iv. 30), or by quenching the Spirit now. (1 Thess. v. 19.)

It will help and encourage us to read what is written about

WELL-PLEASING

as it is applied to God's people.

1. WELL-PLEASING IN YIELDING OURSELVES.

Rom. xii. 1, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy"—this implies the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us (see 1 Pet. i. 2)—"*well-pleasing* to God, which is your spiritual worship" (R.V. marg.). This is a call to make a definite and whole-hearted surrender to God; to yield ourselves to Him, once and for all (Rom. vi. 13). This first and definite yielding to God is well-pleasing, and an act of worship to God in the Spirit.

2. WELL-PLEASING IN YIELDING OUR WILL.

Rom. xii. 2, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye *transfigured*"—this word is used twice of Christ (Matt. xvii. 2, and Mark ix. 2); and twice of His saints (Rom. xii. 2, and 2 Cor. iii. 18)—"by the renewing of your mind."

This transfiguring and renewal of mind is wrought in us by the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 18), and progresses while our hearts, led by the Spirit, are occupied with the Person of our blessed Lord Christ in the glory, in living and loving communion with Him. We are thus taught that whatever we are exhorted to do, or to be, the

Holy Spirit will accomplish in us. This is the key to the fulfilment of every exhortation, commandment, and requirement, which makes any demand upon us. "That ye may prove what is that good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God." We read that will expressed in the Scriptures, and we prove its accomplishment in actual fact in our lives, when we yield our will, and trust the Holy Ghost to work out God's will in us. When our will consents to His will, it is a joint well-pleasing will of God and of ours. But this is the Spirit's work who worketh in us to will God's good pleasure (Phil. ii. 13).

3. WELL-PLEASING IN SERVING CHRIST.

Rom. xiv. 17, 18, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God."

4. WELL-PLEASING IN THE HEART'S AFFECTIONS.

2 Cor. v. 9, "We make it our aim . . . that we may be well-pleasing to Him." This is the continuous, growing, loving desire of a heart constrained by the love of Christ to live wholly to Him (vers. 14, 15).

In the order of these verses the Judgment Seat of Christ (ver. 10) is placed between the loving response of the heart that desires to please God (ver. 9), and the constraining love of Christ moving that heart (ver. 14).

WELL-PLEASING IN DAILY LIFE.

5. Well-pleasing in the practical grace of con-

tributing to the needs of God's ministers in the Gospel—Phil. iv. 18.

6. Practical well-pleasing of children, in their obedience to parents—Col. iii. 20.

7. Well-pleasing of servants in obedience to masters—Tit. ii. 9; which, we understand, means "to be subject to their own masters and so make themselves well-pleasing" to God (N.T.).

8. Well-pleasing in every detail is, after all, the work of God in us—Phil. ii. 13.

And so we learn that to be well-pleasing to God we are to begin with a whole-hearted, unreserving surrender of *ourselves* to Him (Rom. vi. 13, and xii. 1). This entails the yielding of our will to His will (Rom. xii. 2).

It means, next, living for the service of Him who gave His life for us (Rom. xiv. 18; 2 Cor. v. 15). Not being bound by legal obligation, but rather constrained by heart affection, awakened by His love (2 Cor. v. 14). This love service will find expression in active love for those who belong to Christ, and in care for the Lord's work (Phil. iv. 18). It will include every detail of daily life and service, even to that of a little child (Tit. ii. 9, and Col. iii. 20).

And, lastly, in whatsoever way the will of God is fulfilled in our daily life, it is entirely and always well-pleasing to God just so far as the action is willed in our hearts by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and wrought out by His energy and power (Phil. ii. 13; Heb. xiii. 21). If we wholly yield ourselves to God (Rom. vi. 13), and willingly

respond to the leadings of the indwelling Spirit, He will work in us the good pleasure of God; and the Lord Jesus will have the great joy of expressing that good pleasure at His Judgment Seat. In the light of these Scriptures we have but to walk by faith in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and there is no cause for discouragement, but another note for praise to the God of our salvation. Moreover, we have the intercessory prayers of the Holy Spirit on our behalf.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. xiii. 20, 21). So the Spirit's work in us will please God, and glorify Him that died for us and rose again.

And again: "We pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified *in you*, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 11, 12).

We have yet another encouragement in this life of well-pleasing in view of the Judgment Seat, given to us in the example of Enoch. His life has already been reviewed, and is summed up in

a few cogent words. He walked with God (Gen. v. 22) for a long lifetime of three hundred years; and so continued till God took him (v. 24). We are further told that he pleased God; and God gave him word that he had pleased Him, before he was translated from earth to heaven without dying (Heb. xi. 5). Are we to set this case down as impracticable, and such as cannot be repeated in our days? We have in 1 Thess. iv. a revelation, that if we are alive on the earth when our Lord Jesus comes into the air, we too are to be translated without dying (1 Thess. iv. 15-17). What, then, does our God set before us as a life in keeping with such an expectation? In ver. 1 of the same chapter He reminds us "How we ought to walk and to please God," and to "abound" therein "more and more." A sanctified life, consecrated to God, learning of the Spirit how to please God, and empowered by the same Spirit so to do.

A BLAMELESS LIFE IN VIEW OF THE JUDGMENT-SEAT.

Thus far we have been learning the possibility, by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost who is given to us, of being positively well-pleasing to God; and that even in view of the Judgment Seat, to which we are going (2 Cor. v. 9, 10).

Besides this, the same wonderful truth is given to us negatively, even that it is possible to live a *blameless* life here in this world; to be kept blameless while we are here; and to be found so

at the coming of our blessed Lord. We may well ask, "How is this possible?" and the simple answer is, "That which is impossible with men is possible with God." The provision made for the accomplishment of this grace in us is the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost. Let us see.

Phil. ii. 13, 15. After saying (ver. 13) that it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure, we are told the result (ver. 15): "that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

The last words make plain that this is speaking, not of the faultlessness of a future state, but of the blamelessness of the present state, here and now in this world. Such a result is not to be attained by our watchfulness, carefulness, nor endeavour, but simply by God the Holy Ghost making it good in us (ver. 13). The word "harmless" coupled to "blameless" also indicates this work of the Holy Spirit. The Lord says we are to be harmless as doves (Matt. x. 16).

How can we be? By receiving that same Spirit that descended upon Jesus in bodily shape like a dove (Luke iii. 22). Thus the dove-like harmlessness of Jesus, who is holy, harmless, undefiled (Heb. vii. 26), is to be reproduced in us.

Paul, the pattern saint, speaks here again. "Ye are witnesses, *and God also*, how holily, justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among

you . . ." (1 Thessalonians ii. 10). This is no empty boast, no egotism, for the words are inspired. In this respect again Paul is made a living example of what the Holy Ghost can do in a man who was once a persecutor and injurious. Moreover, this blameless life can be maintained—we can be wholly sanctified, and our whole spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it (1 Thess. v. 23, 24).

If it is not done, there is a clear reason why it is not: either we do not obtain the promise by seeking it (Jas. iv. 2); or we are not fully surrendered in our will to the Spirit, who has come into us on purpose to do it. We fail at the 19th verse (1 Thess. v.), we quench the Spirit.

Peter writes to us, in view of the coming day, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" and bids us "be diligent that we may *be found of Him* in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Pet. iii. 11, 14). Why "in peace"? Because it is the God of Peace (1 Thess. v. 23) who undertakes to sanctify us wholly, and keep us blameless till the Lord comes.

There is an opposite to this peace; that is a condemning heart (1 John iii. 20). If our own heart condemn us for evils known and still allowed, unjudged and harboured, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things, and He has

still more reason to judge and condemn such things. But if our heart condemn us not, then have we

CONFIDENCE TOWARD GOD.

We need this confidence that rings through 2 Cor. v. If we have not got it, let us find it at 1 John ii. 27, 28, "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (ver. 28).

But how shall we abide in Him, as the Lord said in John xv. 4, and Whose word is here repeated? The answer is the same grand secret of the true life of a child of God here in this world:—

"The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, . . . the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth [the very Spirit of Truth, the Comforter]. . . . And even *as He hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him*" (1 John ii. 27).

Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins and put them away; He rose again for our justification; He is now exalted at God's right hand, and lives to give us the Holy Ghost (Acts ii. 33, 38, 39). And the Holy Ghost lives in us, that we may live to God.

The promise of our loving Lord Jesus Christ, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself," was given to comfort the hearts that sorrowed for His absence. All the words foretelling His return are fraught with comfort (1 Thess. iv. 18 and v. 11). If any disquieting thought should

arise, that can only be in reference to the subject matters of the Judgment-seat of Christ. And it is just here the infinite love and grace of our God provides for everything beforehand.

His grace gave His Son to die for our sins ; His grace justifies, sanctifies, re-creates us in Christ ; His grace gives us His Holy Spirit to work in us now the good pleasure of His will, and to live in us a holy, blameless, happy life, keeping His commandments, abiding in Christ, bearing fruit, overcoming, and glorifying God, whether in life or in death, until the Lord comes ; so that when He comes the review will be a happy one, because it will manifest the Spirit's work and ways, and not ours.

And the way to the meeting-place will be cheered with a steadfast confidence, not in our success, but in the accomplishment of the purpose which the Spirit of God has come into us to fulfil.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB.

E come now to a subject so wonderful, unfolding such an extreme reach of God's grace, that, unless it were distinctly written, no one might venture to conceive such a thing, nor speak of it. But we shall do well to consider what is written, and learn, as the Spirit may teach us, how "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 4-7.)

The marriage scene is in heaven, and is foretold in Rev. xix.; the chapter begins with a convocation of heavenly beings whose voices unite in worship unto the Lord our God. Hallelujahs resound through the heavens. And as a voice comes out from the throne, "Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great," again the mighty thunderings of the vast

multitudes resound the "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Why this outburst of pent-up heavenly gladness, and joy exceeding the usual joys of heaven? "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."

What an exceeding marvel that the Son of God Most High should be described in human language as a Bridegroom (John iii. 29), and yet, perhaps, more marvellous still that His Bride should be of human race. Wherefore it is with reverence and deep humility that we enquire,

WHO IS THE BRIDE?

In Matt. xxv. 1-13, four times over the Lord names Himself as the coming Bridegroom: not once does He name the Bride. The point of this parable is not so much to teach about the marriage, as to teach His disciples a lesson of the very first importance, how to be *ready* when the Bridegroom comes. Readiness depends on the possession of oil in the vessel as well as the lamp; so runs the parable, but what does that mean?

Oil in types and parables has but one signification: even the presence of the Holy Spirit. There is no testimony for God in the earth, or light for men, apart from the Holy Ghost. So the lamp that gives light must be oil-fed. The testimony of Christ in the world is given by the Spirit, and all who bear the name of Christian are responsible to maintain that light. How many lamps are going

out! how many so-called Christians are renouncing the christianity in which they were born and brought up!

And where are the lamps so shining as to maintain the light in the world? (Phil. ii. 15.) This is possible only where the Holy Spirit is dwelling in the heart, as He does in every true believer (Rom. viii. 9). Such are also ready, when the Bridegroom comes, to go in with Him to the marriage.

Throughout the last chapter of Revelation the Lord repeats His word, "Behold, I come quickly." It is the Coming One who says, "I am the Root and Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star." This is the testimony of Jesus, sent to, and testified *unto, us in the Churches*, and leaves no room for question who are addressed (ver. 16). To Him, the Bright and Morning Star, is given the glad, answering word of love and welcome, "Come." It is the Spirit and Bride who say it. The Bride says, "Come," and to whom should she respond but to her Bridegroom? The Spirit says, "Come." It is thus the Bridegroom receives a worthy response, such as is due to His great, true love for His Bride. The Spirit gives answer to Jesus, but only through the heart and the lips of the Bride. It is one love that answers, one heart that beats for Him, one Spirit that knows Him and longs to see Him, one voice that speaks, and one word is uttered. The Bride says "Come" by the Spirit, who dwells in her heart. The oil in the vessel of the parable is the

Spirit in the heart of all those who unitedly form the Bride. "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). How exactly this describes the case of the virgins who lacked the oil in their vessels: "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." It is the presentation of Jesus Himself that calls forth the answer of the Spirit and the Bride. And as Jesus sends His angel to testify these things in the Churches, it is from among the Churches that the answer is given of

THE SPIRIT AND BRIDE.

We can, then, answer the question that the Bride consists of those, among the Churches, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. How, then, is an anxious enquirer to obtain this Presence of the Spirit to dwell in him? Eph. i. 13 gives the simple answer: he must hear the Word of truth, the Gospel of his salvation, and put his trust in Jesus, of whom that Gospel tells. God will answer his trust in Christ, by sealing him with the Holy Spirit: this sealing is unto the day of redemption (Eph. iv. 30), and means the Gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell in and abide in the one who trusts in Jesus. Many of the Lord's own believing people have never heard or understood that their Saviour is coming again to receive them to Himself. When one hears it for the first time, "Let him that heareth say, Come." So he may immediately unite in true and practical fellowship with the answering Spirit and Bride.

This word in Rev. xxii. 16, 17, is clear in the teaching that all true believers in the Churches are united by the indwelling Spirit, and constitute the Bride of Christ. Other Scriptures consistently teach the same. Eph. v. 23: The Headship of Christ over His Church is compared to a husband's headship over his wife. Ver. 25: The love of Christ for His Church is of the nature of a husband's love. Ver. 29: As a man nourishes and cherishes his wife, so does the Lord His Church. And, lastly, ver. 31, the very words used concerning the first marriage of Adam and Eve (Gen. ii. 24) are repeated as a great mystery, and re-affirmed as the truth, as it concerns Christ and the Church. Thus the relationship between Christ and the Church corresponds, in its nature, responsibility, and affection, to the marriage relation

AS ORDAINED OF GOD.

John xv.: The Lord in this Gospel of John addresses the children of God. Not as Jews, for the nation received Him not; not as the great Gentile world, for it knew Him not (John i. 10, 11). This position was affirmed at the very outset. But there were those that did receive Him. These were born of God: they were all those who believed in His name (John i. 12). He calls them those the Father has given Him out of the world (John xvii.). For all such Jesus prays, and graciously includes all those who should believe on Him through their word (John xvii. 20). "Them

which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 16). This includes us as believers in Him. These are the ones addressed in John xv. 9, as the objects of His *love*. In them He finds His *joy* (ver. 11). He makes them His *friends* by taking them into His confidence and fellowship (vers. 14, 15). They are the objects of His *choice* (ver. 16); and He calls them into *relationship with His Father* (ver. 16). This combination of love, joy, friendship, choice, and bringing into relation with one Father, is to be found only in one human relationship, which is that of a bride to her bridegroom. A mother's love for her child may be the strongest and deepest love that exists, but there is no choice in that relationship, nor friendship, which implies a community of interest and fellowship. In the case of a father with his son, who is the joy and stay of his life, in whom he confides all his affairs, there is love, and joy, and friendship, but still choice is lacking. A man may choose as a bosom friend some congenial heart, and between the two will spring up love, joy, and friendship, and the element of choice exists as well, but there is no union of relation to one Father. But in the Bridal relation all five are complete; and the Lord's word to His people on His resurrection morning was: "My Father . . . your Father . . . and My God . . . your God" (John xx. 17).

Although in John xv. no mention of the Bride is made, yet all the essentials of the relationship

are established between Christ and His saints in these words, which apply to us, and live and abide for ever. And this relationship begins wherever the Spirit dwells in human hearts, and will find its marvellous and most blessed consummation at the marriage of the Lamb. Espoused as a chaste virgin unto Christ (2 Cor. xi. 2), so should the Church in all its members respond to Him in love, devotion, and fidelity.

By the light of these Scriptures we turn again to Rev. xix. 7, and see, in the wife made ready for the marriage, the Church, which was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, loved with an everlasting love, and redeemed unto God. And the climax of the riches of the grace of God and love of Christ, is seen in a relation begun in time, to last in eternity ; a union to be celebrated in heaven, an occasion of rejoicing and gladness that even heaven itself never knew before. The day of days for which heaven and earth were created. The crowning of Christ Jesus in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart (Cant. iii. 11).

Not much is said about the heavenly marriage, but this Scripture sets forth its actual consummation. The love and joy, the glory and the grace, that will then be displayed, are referred to elsewhere.

No verbal description can represent it. Enough is told us to kindle anticipation, and for hope to feed upon and grow.

THE FINE LINEN.

Verse eight goes on to tell of the raiment the Bride will wear. "The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (R.V.). Actual love-tokens from hearts which have been quickened into response to the love of Christ. Well-pleasing spiritual worship presented to Him (Rom. xii. 1, R.V., marg.).

These will have been reviewed at the Judgment Seat of Christ; and the guerdon of His gracious approval, given there, will be fashioned into the raiment and ornaments worn at the marriage.

We must carefully distinguish between God's acts of grace, and the saints' acts of service and devotion.

The righteous acts of saints are but the raiment worn. The raiment does not make the Bride, it only adorns her.

That she is a bride depends entirely on the love, the choice, and good pleasure of Another, to which she has but consented.

The Bride of Christ is called to this wonderful and glorious position by God's infinite and inexplicable grace, wholly apart from any work or worthiness of her own. She is a bride by grace alone. Only in the raiment she wears are her own acts recognised, and even there grace is interwoven, for nothing she ever did could have been righteous, unless it had been wrought in her by the blessed Spirit of God (Gal. v. 22).

So grace excels and triumphs, and the display

of it, in this surpassing scene, will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus in the ages to come (Eph. ii. 7). Then will the Church be manifested as the object of the Father's love and choice for His Son (Eph. i. 4); object of the love and choice of Christ for Himself (v. 25-27), yet loved as His Father's gift (John xvii. 6).

> "Foremost trophy of redeeming grace,
> Crowning glory of redeeming love."

And this Bride is but one, although comprising all who are partakers of Christ, through the same precious faith in Him, and who are indwelt by one and the selfsame Spirit. This oneness, this union, depends absolutely on His presence in each believer. He constitutes them one, and He perpetuates the unity.

For this the saints were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and faultless before the Father in love. And He will never forego His purpose until it shall be perfected and established for ever.

This purpose includes the choice of a companionship for the Son of God, to be suited, and made meet, and answering to His heart in all things.

This truth gleams out in Matt. xxii. 2, as our Lord tells of "a certain king who made a marriage for his son"; and may we not say that every other marriage which has been sanctioned and blessed by God's favour has been ordained of

Him in order to teach us beforehand some of the great mystery concerning Christ and the Church? (Eph. v. 32.)

THE JOY OF HEAVEN.

Jesus and His disciples were invited to the Cana wedding feast (John ii.).

The wine was failing: this wine is the symbol of the joy of the marriage scene. God means it to be a joyful scene.

And a wedding graced by the presence of the Son of God, as an invited guest, could not be surpassed on earth for happiness.

But earthly joy, even Divinely sanctioned, will sooner or later fail. The end of the earthly wine becomes the occasion for Jesus to supply new wine, which tells of a heavenly joy that will never fail.

"Mine hour is not yet come." What hour? When He would give new wine from the empty stone jars? Very likely it was so understood at the time; but we can discern in these same words how Jesus was looking along the ages, and was foreseeing the hour of His own heavenly marriage, His own Wife made ready; and His presence and gift at Cana was a foretaste of the heavenly wine of His joy to come.

MADE HERSELF READY.

To have the Bride ready for the Bridegroom is the ceaseless care of the Holy Ghost.

Every soul new-born to God adds to the Church, and thus increases the growth of the Bride towards her full stature and maturity.

And, besides this, each heart which becomes filled with the Father's love (1 John iii. 1) deepens the character of the Bride according to her true relationship as His child.

So also each heart filled with the joyful expectation of the coming Bridegroom, deepens the character of the Bride in her relationship to Christ, who loved her and gave Himself to death for her sake; the Bridegroom for whom she is created, and whose she shall ever be.

As she learns the purpose of her being and the love with which she is loved, she cannot but respond in affection, and the sense that fidelity to Him becomes her first desire and care. Thus the hope purifies (1 John iii. 3). As the hearts of God's children are increasingly awakened to know the love of Christ, so the bridal welcome, "Even so come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20), becomes increasingly distinct and loving.

NOT SEEN, BUT LOVED.

But how is it possible for us to know and to love, and to long for the coming of, One we have never seen?

We recall our Lord's words to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have *not seen*, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29). And the Spirit carries this further in 1 Pet. i. 8, "Whom having not seen, ye love." With our natural eyes we have never seen Him. But we have another power of vision described in John xiv. 19, "The world seeth Me no more; *but ye see Me.*" This is not

the future sight in glory, but present sight in the Spirit, the present Comforter—the indwelling Holy Spirit, "whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth . . . in you." "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; *but ye see Me.*"

Here is a vision of Christ, given by the Spirit, a knowledge of Christ while absent in bodily form, more intimately present in spirit than was ever known when He was on earth; known by the Spirit, seen by the Spirit, learned by the Spirit, till Christ becomes to the engaged heart the altogether lovely One whom the soul loveth. Thus, by the presence and gracious intuition of the Holy Spirit, the affections of the Bride are being won to Christ, and her heart prepared for the marriage.

Was there ever a bride so cold, and so hard to win? But the Spirit is infinitely loving and patient. Moreover, there is to be a day of sight before the marriage day—a sight of Himself at the meeting-place in the clouds, which will completely transform all who then see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2).

Now we see obscurely—then it will be face to face—as now by the Spirit with unveiled face we reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into His image; when we see Him as He is, the transformation will be complete.

HIS GLORY REVEALED.

What a radiant scene will that heavenly marriage be! Christ revealed in His glory, and His Bride like Him.

What a day will that be—the day of heaven's great joy! The day when the eternal happiness and joy of heaven shall be surpassed beyond all that created beings ever conceived.

The proclamation through the heavens runs, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come" (Rev. xix. 7).

If the thought should rise, But if there is a spiritual union of heart and life between Christ and people now established in the Spirit, what more can be needed?

It seems this heavenly marriage is the public acknowledgment and celebration of a union not in spirit only, but of spirit, soul, and glorified body also, between Christ and His Church—a consummation which existing heart affection is leading to, and when revelations will be made in the fulfilment of God's eternal purposes which will astonish the heavens, when God will display "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7).

God unfolds to us His marvellous purposes by comparison with the well-known events of human life, so that we may understand and take them in. Is it possible that the Eternal Son of the Most High God should regard His union with His

beloved and redeemed people as a bridegroom does a bride, and look forward, as to a day of surpassing joy, when that union will be consummated?

It is even so. And not only has this heavenly marriage been predestined from before the foundation of the world, but God has foreordained a marriage supper to follow in due order, so that others may participate in the universal gladness, and share the blessings of that day in the degrees that accord with their varied estates.

The announcement of the marriage and the supper to follow it is given in a few simple words; but so inconceivably marvellous is the truth thus presented that it receives a special attestation, "These be the true sayings of God."

FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

The Bride is not called to the marriage supper; the Bridegroom and Bride conjointly invite the guests. Who are these invited guests, these heavenly friends, these blessed ones, who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb?

In Matt. xxv. 1-13 the Bridegroom is named four times, without any mention of a Bride. In Rev. xxii. 17 the Spirit-led Bride responds to the Bright and Morning Star, but He is not named as Bridegroom. There is one verse in the New Testament, which gives both sides of the relationship complete, "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom" (John iii. 29). Here is the full revelation of the "great mystery" spoken con-

cerning Christ and the Church (Eph. v. 32). As we read on, we come to "the friend of the Bridegroom that standeth and heareth Him," who "rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice." And it is John the Baptist who says, "This my joy therefore is fulfilled."

John, the greatest of prophets (Luke vii. 28), declares Himself to be one of the Bridegroom's friends, rejoicing even to hear His voice. This is conclusive as showing that John is one of these friends and blessed called ones. Doubtless the greatest and last of the line of prophets who preceded the coming of Christ speaks not only for himself, but including all other prophets lesser than he. And if the friends include the prophets before Christ, the company must take in all the saints as well who died in faith before that great epoch when the Holy Ghost descended from the glorified Christ on the Day of Pentecost, baptising all those then assembled into one Church, and thereafter adding to that Church daily such as should be saved (Acts ii. 32, 33, 38, 41, 47).

Those that had passed away before this first baptism of the Holy Ghost will assuredly be among the dead in Christ who are to be first raised (1 Thess. iv. 16): caught up together with the living saints, to meet the Lord in the air; together enthroned and crowned among the glorified elders as kings and priests unto God; together in the "heavenly calling" (Heb. iii 1);

divided only at the marriage, which will distinguish the Bride from the friends.

Why should one star differ from another star in glory? Who can answer? Who shall say unto Him, "What doest Thou?" Certainly it is no personal merit that can give anyone a claim to the higher blessing. Grace alone assigns to each his place.

SPECIAL DAY OF GRACE.

But this we surely learn, that a new era of special favour began on the Day of Pentecost, and has been running on since then. These are days in which God comes nearer to men than ever before since the creation of Adam—days in which He comes nearer than to walk in happy converse with man in the cool of the day; nearer than when coming to dine with His friend Abraham, and to take him into His confidence; nearer even than when, as the Word made flesh, He came and dwelt amongst us. Nearest of all, He comes in the Person of the Holy Ghost to dwell in us, and walk in us, to pray in us, and live in us, so that we may ever see Jesus and know the Father's love. It is these chosen vessels in whom God has made a habitation for Himself through the accomplished atonement of Christ, and His consecrating sacrifice (Heb. x. 10), in whose hearts Christ has dwelt by His Spirit already, and whose fellowship with Himself has begun in the communion of the Holy Ghost, that He is uniting into one, to be the nearest and dearest companion of His glorified humanity.

This is the grand distinguishing blessing of this day of grace in which we are born of God—that, having made us children, God comes to dwell in us, and to abide in us; and it is the purpose of His coming to conform and transfigure us into the image of God's Son (Rom. viii. 29; 2 Cor. iii. 18). So the friends called to the marriage supper are blessed indeed, will rejoice greatly at the Bridegroom's voice as they stand and hear Him, and the Bride will be even more blessed still, blessed with a joy exceeding in her Bridegroom's love.

What a scene of gladness and heavenly joy! Angelic hosts and the glorious Seraphim shall join in the universal Hallelujah. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him. Hallelujah! These be the true sayings of God.

We come now to the last of the series of heavenly scenes—the prophetic visions given to John in Patmos—to show to us things which must shortly come to pass (Rev. i. 1).

John sees the heaven opened for the last time. Thenceforward, when the King descends to take His earthly kingdom, the heaven shall remain open, and through those heavenly portals the angels of God shall uninterruptedly be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of Man (John i. 51).

The apostle sees the hosts of heaven marshalling as an army going forth to battle. At the head of all he sees the King, whose name is called

THE WORD OF GOD. Authority is given to Him to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man (John v. 27). For many long centuries He has been the appointed Judge of quick and dead; but through all those ages He has waited to be gracious. He was exalted to the right hand of God that He might show mercy (Isa. xxx. 18), and God's longsuffering has been waiting through the days of grace.

The prayers from earth, prayed throughout two thousand years, "Thy kingdom come," shall at length be answered. Many hearts will thrill in memory of words once spoken by one of earth's transient potentates, "Behold your King!" (John xix. 14). Behold your King! All ye His angels, praise Him in the heights; praise ye Him, all His hosts. Praise ye Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars of light; praise Him, ye heaven of heavens (Ps. cxlviii.). He is called Faithful and True; in righteousness He doth judge and make war. From His searching eyes nothing can be hid. Once crowned with thorns, He bore the curse of earth for Adam's sin; now crowned with many crowns, He bears only the glory. Before He leaves the heavens He is crowned the Universal King. It is there in the presence of His Father He receives dominion, and glory, and a kingdom everlasting, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him (Dan. vii. 14). As He leaves the heavens we know that all the holy angels will be with Him (Matt. xxv. 31). And

we know, too, that all His saints will be with Him also (Zech. xiv. 5), and the words of 1 Thess. iv. 17 confirm this truth as well. From the first moment of meeting Him in the air, *so shall we ever be with the Lord.* This covers the descent from the heavens, as well as all other events. This passage (Rev. xix. 11-16) describes the preparations in heaven for the descent to earth of the Lord Jesus. It gives the heaven side of the scene.

All the scenes we have been contemplating have been fulfilled, each one in its due order, without haste or delay. And at the moment when earthly events have culminated to a crisis, ripe for the intervention of the heavenly King, He will come.

THE LORD MY GOD SHALL COME.

In Matt. xxiv. 30 the Lord Himself foretells another stage of His progress, when He has left the heavens, attended by saints and angels, and is just appearing within the range of vision of men on earth : "All tribes of the earth shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

"As the lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth even unto the West, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. xxiv. 27). Connecting with this the account given in Luke xvii. 24—"For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall the Son of Man be in His day"—we learn His appearing will be

accompanied by a marvellous outshining of light, visible throughout the whole earth, sudden and terrific, and carrying conviction to all intelligent creatures that the heavenly King has come. That it means judgment, needs no further announcement—men's own hearts will convict them. The delusions of the Prince of Darkness will cease to operate when the first rays shine out from the King of Glory as He is nearing this earth ; every eye shall see Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him (Rev. i. 7).

Now we turn to Zech. xiv., and find the description of His arrival on the Mount of Olives. The last campaign of the allied armies of the world, led by the great Emperor of all the earth, to whom Satan has given power, his seat, and great authority, has just been crowned with victory. Jerusalem has been besieged and taken, and the emperor sees the world at his feet. But short is his triumph, as in a moment the heavens are lit up with a light above the brightness of the sun, and he finds himself and his false prophet withering under the outshining glory of the Son of God. "These both are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." One word from the lips of the King of kings, and all their armies perish.

CHAPTER VIII.

EVENTS ON EARTH AFTER THE TRANSLATION.

N previous chapters we have been considering the scenes in the heavens through which our Lord Jesus Christ will conduct His beloved saints, after their first great meeting with Himself in the air.

Through scenes of eternal love, joy and peace He will lead His loved ones, in the Presence of the Father, and in the quiet precincts of His home ; again, into scenes of majesty, power, and glory, and personal manifestations of Himself in the Heavenly Throne Room and Sanctuary, where all hearts will be aflame with worship and adoration ; yet again will He lead on to scenes of happiness, fulness of love and joy, at the Marriage and the Supper ; and onward still to the marvels of grandeur and glory when the heavens shall be opened and the King go forth, with His heavenly train, to re-visit the earth and take possession of His long-alienated kingdom.

The word given us as the keynote of satisfaction and delight, at the moment of meeting, "So shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 17), will cover all these varied, wonderful, and glorious heavenly scenes.

We now turn back to take up the thread of the

events which are to transpire on earth during the period that the Lord and His people are away together in the heavens, beginning at the moment of the translation, when the dead in Christ will be raised, and the living changed and caught up to meet Him in the air.

OUR PRESENT ATTITUDE OF EXPECTATION.

Let us recall some Scripture words relating to this great event of unparalleled interest and importance. 1 Cor. xv. 51: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." This gives us no idea when it will be, but impresses us with the suddenness with which it will happen.

The Lord would have us always in an attitude of expectancy, hearing His own word, "Surely I come quickly," and answering back to Him with loving delight, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20). "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37). "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us" (Tit. ii. 13). "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thess. iii. 5).

Our exercise of patience will soon be over for ever, so we should make the most of it. While we are waiting for the redemption of our body, we have opportunities for glorifying and pleasing our blessed, coming Lord, which will not occur

again; and at the same time we are being prepared for a fuller and deeper enjoyment of the blessings that are ours in Christ at His coming. While our expectations are thus glorious and joyful, what is the prospect lying before the world and every day drawing nearer?

THE WORLD'S CATASTROPHE.

Its rush of business is growing more and more engrossing of time, energy, and thought; its pleasure-seeking more intense and captivating; its religion more blinding and deadening; God's Word is lightly esteemed, criticised, and set aside; God Himself is treated with indifference, if not contempt. All the rounds of business and pleasure are going in full swing, when suddenly something happens. Something unprecedented, altogether out of the reckoning of men of the world, and foreign to the ideas of society. Nevertheless, all classes and conditions are involved, and all at once. People are missing; without warning or announcement they have simply disappeared—from homes, from schools, from office, desk, and business mart. People of all ages, all ranks of life, are suddenly gone. Where? Where is mother? She was here just now; no one saw her go out. What makes the son so late in coming home? Children come home to mother from their walk, saying, "Nurse suddenly left us; we couldn't see which way she went." Business men have disappeared; conversations are interrupted—one vanished, the other was left wonder-

ing. And so in ten thousand various ways it is the one strange, unaccountable, instantaneous visitation—the same anxious question in home and street, in palace, factory, and village, on land and at sea.

Where are they gone? The question, beginning in private, soon surges out into public agitation, growing momentarily more exciting as anxiety deepens into astonishment and alarm. As the numbers of bewildered friends of the missing ones increase, games stop, schools stop, meals stop, business stops. One topic fills the mind of everybody. Trade soon becomes paralysed; and the great wheels of commerce, that have kept going for centuries, have to stop, because of the numbers of posts vacated, and the shock which unnerves all those who remain.

THE "AFTERWARD" (Matt. xxv. 11).

Alarm and sickening doubt grows into horror, and a dreaded thought begins to arise: "Can this possibly be what the Christians used to tell us of? Oh, fools that we have been!" The misgiving strengthens, grows into conviction, and spreads apace. Multitudes are falling on their knees, both in private and in public. Now despair is finding tongue; a universal cry is going out from hearts that never prayed before. Expressed in countless different forms of words, it is but one petition, it means but one great agonising cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" (Matt. xxv. 11.) Every petitioner hears the answer in

his very soul. The voice that pleaded so often so tender and gracious, and was so cruelly despised, is heard at last in stern, decisive tones, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not" (ver. 12).

"The Lord knoweth them that are *His'* (2 Tim. ii. 19). They were sealed with His seal of possession, indwelt by His Spirit; or, in the words of the parable, they had the oil in their vessels, with their lamps,—the Holy Spirit in their hearts; but all these are gone. "I know you not" declares these that are left behind are not owned as His.

In a very short while it is found that all over the earth this great and dread visitation fell at the same moment of time. Too sick to think, the world will be staggered and horror-stricken. Now comes Satan's opportunity. He forges a strong delusion, and men will believe a lie; those who in happier days would not believe the truth.

Comforted and reassured by Satan, the world will begin to resume its avocations; by degrees it will settle down to reconstruct its shattered organisations; and with new occupation will come new aspirations, new schemes, new inventions, and as the first terrifying shock of supernatural intervention wears off, the world will relapse into its wonted regardlessness of God.

Very soon a succession of great and startling events will so occupy men's minds and attention, that there will be no time to think, nor to

consider that the flowing tide is hurrying them to their final doom.

While Satan develops his malignant schemes for Christ's dishonour, and man's destruction, God will still work for the glory of His Son, and in mercy to mankind.

Those that have already rejected the grace offered them, as it had been to others before them, through many generations, have gone beyond the limit of goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering (Rom. ii. 4, 5), and are left for the righteous judgment of God. But multitudes that never yet heard of Christ shall have a last offer of salvation through His atoning death and resurrection, before the day of mercy ends.

It is too late for any more to join the company and inheritance of the heavenly saints, but these benighted souls who have not known the Gospel may yet be saved for the blessings of the earthly kingdom, and escape the curse of Malachi iv. 6.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM REVIVED.

In the description of the judgment in Matt. xxv., and particularly in the words the King addresses to those on His right hand, and also on His left, He speaks of the treatment He has received at the hands of those then and there summoned before Him. When all alike disclaim any such personal dealing with Him, He declares that what had been done to His brethren had been done to Himself (Matt. xxv. 40, 45). "These My brethren" (ver. 40) implies that they are there

present. These brethren form a company quite distinct from both the "sheep on the right" and the goats on the left—who are they?

When our Lord was here He called His disciples and apostles His brethren (Matt. xii. 49; Mark iii. 34). Again we read in Luke ix. 1-11, how He sent out the twelve apostles to preach the kingdom of God. In Luke x. 1, other seventy are also sent out, two and two, to preach that the kingdom of God was come nigh to them.

In Matt. iv. 23, we read the Lord Himself went about all Galilee preaching "the Gospel of the kingdom."

After the King was finally refused and crucified, raised again and glorified, a new Gospel was preached, which is called in Acts xx. 24, "the Gospel of the grace of God," and which proclaims all the blessing God is offering in the days we live in now.

GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM COMPARED WITH THE GOSPEL OF GRACE.

The Gospel of the kingdom presented Christ as the promised Messiah, the King of Israel, claiming His earthly throne. The nation refused Him and crucified Him as an impostor. But God raised Him from the dead, and declared that the resurrection of Christ is His token to all men that He will judge the world for the murder of His Son (Acts xvii. 31)

The Holy Spirit in the apostles testified the same thing to the nation of the Jews (Acts ii.

22-24, 36, 40 ; iii. 13-21 ; v. 28-32). Although the nation did not then repent, God did not proceed at once to mete out retribution on the murderers. He held back the judgment, and sent forth instead a gracious Gospel, proclaiming mercy to all mankind, full pardon of all sin, even including the crime of the crucifixion of Christ ; offering this mercy to every one who will accept it through Christ.

Moreover, in this new Gospel He proclaims, to all who will receive it, eternal life, relationship to Himself as beloved children, and a *heavenly* inheritance together with Christ in eternal glory.

Those who take God at His word, believing in Christ and in His atoning death and resurrection, so receiving His Gospel message of grace, become His heavenly saints. This Gospel necessarily supersedes for the time the Gospel of the kingdom, which offers earthly blessings only to earthly subjects ; whereas those who believe the Gospel in these days are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of their inheritance (Eph. i. 3, 13, 14). The present Gospel of the grace of God makes the receiver a *heavenly* saint, whereas the receiver of the Gospel of the kingdom becomes an *earthly* saint. The Gospel of the grace of God well deserves its name, for in it, notwithstanding the outrage perpetrated against Him and His beloved Son, God freely offers all the blessings

and glory we have tried to contemplate in the Father's home and love, in the glory of the throne, and the joys of the heavenly marriage to Christ Himself, to every one that will receive the exceeding riches of His grace ; and He tells us He is going to make all the universe marvel at the display of His kindness to us through Christ Jesus. All this to those who were before dead in trespasses and sins.

God teaches us that it is the atonement made by the blood of Christ that justifies Him in pardoning sinners, seeing that Christ died for them (Rom. iii. 25, 26).

The extreme reach of mankind's wickedness is met by the extreme reach of Divine love and mercy, and this is called the exceeding riches of His grace, nothing less than which is the measure of our forgiveness (Eph. i. 7).

When the Lord comes and takes His believing people to Himself (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17), the door will be shut (Matt. xxv. 10), and the Gospel of God's grace, which invites sinners to share the heavenly inheritance of saints in light, will cease for ever.

Again we read in Matt. xxiv. 14, "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come." From this we learn the Gospel of the kingdom will be preached again. To put it briefly, the Gospel of the kingdom began with the coming of the King. It was suspended becaus

He was rejected and crucified by those who should have been His loyal subjects.

The Gospel of God's grace was based on the accomplished atonement of the Cross, and the ascension of Christ to glory: it began when the Holy Spirit was poured forth at Pentecost; it will end with the translation of all that have received it.

Then the Gospel of the kingdom will be resumed, to gather in subjects for the earthly dominion, and will be preached until the King actually comes.

"THESE MY BRETHREN" (Matt. xxv. 40).

We therefore conclude that these His brethren are the heralds of this final Gospel, and that when these evangelists have given their message throughout the whole world, then the King will come.

The first messengers sent out with the Gospel of the kingdom went forth without any supply of food, or money, or reserve of clothing (Luke ix. 3). The Lord ordered they should be provided for by those who received the messengers and their message (Luke x. 7-16). It would be an evidence of their allegiance to the Master if they received His servants. If the servants were housed and fed and clothed, visited when sick, or in the prisons of their persecutors, the Lord would count it as done to Himself. Bearing this in mind, it exactly corresponds with the Lord's verdict from the judgment throne: "I was hungry, and ye gave Me meat; thirsty, and ye gave Me drink" (Matt. xxv. 35).

Those on the left hand refused the Gospel of

the kingdom, in the persons of the King's messengers, and as a consequence are purged out of His kingdom as offenders (Matt. xiii. 41, 42).

Considering the vast field to be covered, and the short space of time in which the Gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed, and the opposition it will encounter, we infer the number of these evangelists will be great, and their progress rapid. Foremost amongst these evangelists will be Elijah (Mal. iv. 5).

It has been asked, Will those who hear the Gospel of grace in these days and do not accept it, but are among those who are shut out when the Lord comes,—will such as they have another opportunity of receiving the Gospel when it is sent forth again?

The answer seems to us to be given in 2 Thess. i. 7-9; ii. 10-12. Here we learn that a wicked one will be revealed, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders; and those men of the world who did not receive the Gospel as it is preached to-day will be deceived when this messenger of Satan appears on the scene. God will

SEND THEM A STRONG DELUSION,

and they will believe a lie, because they would not believe the truth of His grace when they had the opportunity.

It will come true to them as the Lord said, "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name,

him ye will receive" (John v. 43). These scriptures lead us to the terrible conclusion that those who reject the Gospel of the grace of God prior to the Lord's coming, will not submit to the later Gospel of the kingdom, and consequently will be found among those on the left hand of the King, when He takes the throne of His glory.

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS (Matt. xxiv. 8).

While the Evangelists are eagerly and earnestly proclaiming the Gospel of the Coming Kingdom of Christ, their missions directed, and testimony empowered, by the Holy Spirit, every day is shortening the little while that remains of the days of salvation for this world.

The Lord's words addressed to Churches on earth have ceased (Rev. i., ii., and iii.), for the saints have been translated to heaven, and reappear among the glorified elders in heaven (Rev. iv. and v.).

The Lamb in the midst of the heavenly throne, surrounded by seraphim and elders, is opening the seals of the Book of Judgments.

As the seals are opened in heaven, the judgments on earth begin.

Plague and pestilences are more or less common on the earth even now, and are always sent by God as a warning to men to bethink themselves of His righteous claims over them, and to seek His mercy as did the men of Nineveh (Jonah iii. 10; Matt. xii. 41); but the plagues, famines, and visitations of war following the opening of the

seals will exceed in extent, and awful devastating effects, anything ever known before.

The description is short and terrific. Peace is taken from the earth (Rev. vi. 4). There follow in quick succession convulsions on earth, at sea, and among the heavenly bodies; eruptions of fire, storm, hail, such as fill the earth-dwellers with terror and dismay. All these are but the beginning of sorrows (Matt. xxiv. 8).

SATAN CAST DOWN.

The world is trying to forget that most startling and disconcerting event ever known in its history, the sudden translation from earth to heaven of those multitudes of human beings, when another event transpires, a counterpart of awful significance, which is nothing less than the outcasting from heaven to earth of a multitude of rebellious Angelic Beings (Rev. xii. 7-12). The only justification for the presence of man in heaven lies in this: they are redeemed unto God by the blood of the Lamb. And the reason for Satan's expulsion from heaven is his rebellion against God—a rebellion inveterate, long-continued, and unrepented of, which culminated in the attempts against the Son of God at Calvary. Satan's followers, be they angels or men, have involved themselves in his ruin.

Thus we see the Son of God is the Centre of the Universe. Those He stands for, and who stand for Him, are *saved*; and those who side against Him are *lost*, be they angels or men.

What think ye of Christ? is the question for all creation. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve; and at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, be they heavenly, earthly, or infernal. Many are now teaching that Jesus was a good man, an ideal man, an example for all time, for men to follow and be good.

This compliment was offered Him before, and He repudiated it utterly. "Why callest thou Me good? there is none good save One, that is, God" (Luke xviii. 19). To preach Him as a good man, therefore, will not avail; it will count against His divine majesty as well as open blasphemy, for the decree has gone forth, and will be enforced, that God only shall be worshipped, and that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father (Isa. xlv. 23; Phil. ii. 10, 11).

Satan's long war against God, waged on earth in men's rebellious lives, and above the earth in rebel wills of fallen angels, is to ripen into open war in heaven.

The armies of heaven, led by Michael the Archangel, meet Satan and his angelic host, and cast them down out of heaven, and that for ever.

A warning was given of impending movements when the Lord, with the voice of the Archangel, descended into the air, and made Satan's realm the place of meeting with His saints. This is

now followed up with the final expulsion of Satan from those regions, and this comes upon him as a knell that says his time is short (Rev. xii. 10-12).

A great voice in heaven expresses its relief from the presence of Satan and his incessant accusations against the people of God. This word gives to us a glimpse of the marvellous patience of God, who bears so long, even with Satan himself, and is so unwilling to punish.

The coming of Satan to the earth bodes ill ; he comes down having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. It introduces a new era, and new forms of wickedness ; a dispensation of Satan which will soon begin to be manifested in the advance of human affairs.

DANIEL'S LAST WEEK.

At the same time that God is sending forth His heralds of the Kingdom, the final stage of Daniel's great prophecy of the Seventy Weeks must find its place. That prophecy was predetermined upon Daniel's people, the Jews, and on the holy city Jerusalem (Dan. ix. 24). With the cutting-off of the Messiah at the end of the sixty-ninth week, God rejected the people, and the seventieth week fell into abeyance. The Gospel of God's grace was sent out to all nations, and by its means the Church was gathered out of the world and finally translated to heaven. Then, as God begins to resume His dealings with His Jewish people, the seventieth prophetic week will naturally begin to run its course.

The sixty-nine weeks of years, or sixty-nine times seven years, are four hundred and eighty-three years, and these can approximately be counted between the starting-point of the prophecy in Nehemiah's time to the crucifixion of Christ. From this we know that whenever the seventieth week begins, seven more years will complete the prophecy; that is, to finish the transgression, bring in everlasting righteousness, and the consummation of the wickedness of men in opposition to God; and when these seven years have run their course, the Son of Man shall come in His glory.

THE BEAST OF REV. XIII. 1.

Amid the horrors of famines, plagues, and raging wars, great political schemes are being discussed; a concert of nations, a grand federation of the leading Powers of the world, for mutual protection against war and aggression, and for the aggrandisement of the human race. The old policy of Babel is to be revived (Gen. xi. 4), and the principles of the first World-kingdom shall be developed in the last. A new era of prosperity is to be inaugurated.

A new name is heard, of a statesman of remarkable gifts and attainments, who becomes a rising power in his own country (Rev. xiii. 1). He shows great resource and skill in diplomacy, and gives great impetus to the Federation Scheme, which is rapidly taking hold on men's minds. A convention of nationalities is held, federation is

decided upon, and by universal acclamation the supreme dictatorship is vested in this one man, who suddenly springs from private life, an unknown man, to be the Imperial Head of the reorganised Roman Empire.

But everything will be going fast in those days, for Satan himself is at the helm, and gives the pace, and he knows his time is short.

And so there appears, to the delight and admiration of men, the last form of the Fourth Kingdom of Daniel's great prophetic vision—the prophecy of Gentile successions to power in the world (Dan. ii. 40).

As this fourth kingdom revives and becomes reunited, it is centred in the final Head of *Gentile* sovereignty, the Beast of Rev. xiii. 1, a Great Emperor whose sceptre will sway the world. Men will rejoice in the greatness of the man they have chosen to reign over them, little reckoning that it is Satan who gives him his power, his throne, and great authority (Rev. xiii. 2), and that his kingdom is only growing up into ripeness for destruction at the Second Coming of the Christ whose Name they desire to forget!

The same tempter who once offered the kingdoms of the world to Jesus if He would worship him, now finds a willing tool ready to his hand.

COVENANT WITH THE JEWS.

The Jewish people, burning in their desire to regain their ancient land and nationality, seek the help of this great World-Emperor, and a covenant

is made that he will protect them from their enemies and reinstate them in Palestine for seven years (*the last week*) in return for their allegiance (Dan. ix. 27).

SCIENCE FALSELY SO-CALLED (1 Tim. vi. 20).

The so-called Christians, who were so terrified when the Lord called away His people, have many of them by this time cast off all form of religion. Others flock after the popular preachers of the day, who still cry, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jer. viii. 8-11; Rev. vi. 4). These self-styled priests and prophets have more enthusiastic congregations than ever. There is no one to question their orthodoxy; they lead the new ideas. Are they not the glory of the age, and the leaders of modern thought? They have all the learning of the schools, and all the treasures of science; they have quite proved that Christ was only human, but their own race is divine. There is no inspiration, because there is no God to inspire (Ps. xiv. 1). The great translation that caused such intense excitement all over the civilised world was only a phenomenon of imagination; and the only wonder that survives is that people were so much affected by it. The popular preaching that was beginning to be heard before the translation, becomes the creed of the world in the after times.

So ignorant are these learned leaders, and so blinded by their self-importance, that they cannot see how the Scriptures described them to the very

life two thousand years before. And so the world decides it will forget the past, live for the present, and make of the future just what it pleases.

THE OTHER BEAST (Rev. xiii. 11).

Who is this learned Doctor that all the world is talking and reading about, the latest new man of the age? They say he is propounding some new religion, and the Emperor has taken him up. With a new era, and modern thought, of course there should be a new religion. Here is at once a new religion, and a new apostle to teach it. What his name is, or by what title the world will know him, we are not told; but the title given him in the Scripture is the False Prophet (Rev. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10). He is the exponent of the new religion, and has conceived the determination that it shall be the one religion of the whole world. Its tenets are simple and definite. Christ is to be renounced; the god of the world is Satan; the authority of the great World-Emperor is to be acknowledged, and the religion of the Prophet conformed to. This is called

THE APOSTASY,

or "Falling Away" (2 Thess. ii. 3), when *The Man of Sin* is revealed; because those who once professed faith in Christ will absolutely renounce all recognition of Him.

The consummate leader of wickedness proceeds to make an image of the Emperor, and with magical and satanic power endows the image with breath and speech, and, to all appearance, life. He

then decrees that public worship shall be offered to the image, and that anyone who dares to refuse shall be punished with death.

By this time the Evangelists of the Gospel of the Kingdom have advanced far on their way in the preaching to every creature. They have found but little active opposition; many have refused them, but still very great numbers of all nations have received their message, and are now looking for the coming of the King of Kings to take His rightful throne. They abhor the pretensions of the great head of Satan's kingdom, and the wicked teaching of the False Prophet.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION.

But Satan has not yet satisfied his ambition. He is not content that the world worships him. He wants to be worshipped in the one spot on earth that was once chosen for the worship of Jehovah (Deut. xii. 5). To the Temple just rebuilt at Jerusalem the great king shall go and take possession. The traditions of the Jewish people shall centre in him. He shall take his seat in the Holy of Holies; he himself shall be a visible god, and worshipped as divine. This is the sign the Lord has given to His people, on which those who live in Judea are immediately to flee to the mountains and make their escape (Matt. xxiv. 15). The pride and presumption of Satan is reproduced in this creature of an hour, and has no bounds. These claims of the Emperor do not accord with the covenant he has made with

the Jews, and they resist. But it is too late. The Emperor sets the treaty aside, and, as foretold by Daniel, breaks the covenant in the midst of the week (Dan. ix. 27).

THE MARK OF THE BEAST.

In order to enforce submission and compliance with the new decrees, the False Prophet ordains that all persons shall make an open avowal of allegiance, and acknowledgment of the King, by displaying a mark which all can see. No one is to be allowed to buy or sell unless they wear the mark. Refusal to comply with this order will, of course, quickly bring those who will not worship the Beast under the notice and vengeance of the authorities (Rev. xiii. 15-17).

This wicked decree calls for a special warning from God. An angel is sent forth with a proclamation of the most terrific judgments that will overtake all men who receive this mark of the Beast or display it (Rev. xiv. 9-11). We can but faintly imagine the horrors of those days.

The determination of the converts to await the coming of the true King from heaven will expose them to all the fury of the reigning power of Satan, through the Beast and the False Prophet. The only respite is death for those who die for the faith of Jesus and rest in the Lord (Rev. xiv. 12, 13). This is the time of

THE GREAT TRIBULATION;

its period curtailed within the last half of the

week; specified as forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days.

With such means of searching out all believers in Christ, none could escape, if only time enough were given to carry the inquisition throughout the world. Unless the days were shortened, no flesh should be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22).

Forty-two months is the limit already fixed, and will be found insufficient for these agents of the devil to work out their wicked schemes, and consequently many will escape. Multitudes will seal their faith with their blood; but they will soon be seen again in that glorious company on the crystal sea, who have gotten the victory over the Beast, and over his image, and over his mark, . . . having the harps of God; and they sing the song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb (Rev. xv. 2). Very beautiful is this

COMBINED SONG OF MOSES AND OF THE LAMB.

The keynote of the Song of Moses is glory to God for redemption from the power of the enemy. I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is My Strength and my Song, and He is become my salvation (Exod. xv. 1, 2). He hath overthrown the enemy. Well might a redeemed nation sing in their joy of deliverance from cruel bondage (Exod. vi. 9), joy of salvation in impending danger (Exod. xiv. 13), and through the sea of death (xiv. 29).

The Song of the Lamb resounds in perfect harmony with the same note of redeeming mercy and grace, delivering out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, but it runs up to higher strains ; it rises to the highest pitch that creature music can ever reach : "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou hast redeemed us UNTO GOD by Thy blood."

So the Songs of Moses and the Lamb united form the Song of the Redeemed whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy (Ps. cvii. 2), and brought unto Himself (Exod. xix. 4 ; Rev. v. 9).

When will this Song ever cease to reverberate through the Courts of the Lord ? Time was when angels must have sung alone in gladness that God forgave His sinful creature man (Isa. xliv. 22, 23) ; but when the saints shall lead the praises of their Redeemer, the hearts of angelic hosts will overflow with sympathetic joy—seraphs, men, and angels will take their parts in universal pæans of praise unto the Lamb that was slain. Here we can see yet another

ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION.

The universal truth that God is Love ; the universal proof the Lamb was slain ; the universal song that rises from hearts that have learnt this Love. Men, once fallen, now redeemed, love Him whose great love gave Jesus to die ; love Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Moreover, angels who sing shall never fall away as others have done before, for they, too, sing for love to Him who gave His Best Beloved to save the lost,

and their hearts are bound in love's eternal bond to God and to the Lamb.

God and His creatures united through Christ will live eternally to enjoy and reciprocate the love of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

THE LAST HALF-WEEK.

Terrible will be the days for this earth when the latter half of Daniel's last week runs its course. It is the climax of Satan's long course of rebellion and working against God, which we can trace from the temptation in the Garden of Eden, and persistently pursued ever since.

His scheme has been to turn God's creature, man, against God, and use him as the instrument of his rebellious hostility to God and His Christ. For a few short months he will have his long-coveted ambition, in the worship rendered to him, which is due to God alone. This is the direct outcome of the misplaced confidence which Eve put in Satan, when she believed him that the tree was to be desired to make one wise (Gen. iii. 6). How many of her fallen children since then have believed Satan rather than God; chosen Barabbas instead of Christ; changed the truth of God into a lie; worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever (Rom. i. 25). With Satan worshipped, the world is in misery; peace is taken from the earth; iniquity abounds in "overspreading abominations" (Dan. ix. 27).

It is the Satanic opposite of the kingdom of Christ: "In His days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Ps. lxxii. 7). Like a conquered foe, infuriated by the consciousness of defeat, and feeling the cords of a mighty victor tightening around him, he uses the last moments of freedom to accomplish all the mischief he can. Cast out of heaven, he will concentrate all his forces in the earth. He knows his time is short (Rev. xii. 12).

A few months of pride, boasting, tyranny, lawless wickedness, exaltation of man and Satan, blasphemy against God, persecution of His people: such is the one short summer season of Satan's prospects. Ps. ii. 1-3 was fulfilled when the powers of this world conspired and crucified the Christ of God (Acts iv. 25-28), and there will be yet another fulfilment of the same prophecy when all the world-powers combine with Satan to cast off all restraint, defy God, and avowedly hold the world against His Christ.

THE VIALS OF WRATH.

Terrific warning-judgments fall, but men heed not. They are blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. iv. 4). Maddened by physical sufferings, they only blaspheme the more (Rev. ix. 5, 6; xvi. 8-11). As the time approaches for the fulfilment of the warnings of eternal doom in the Lake of Fire, God will let men feel the heat the sun can give forth, when His angel pours out on it his vial. Since men heed not God's word of

mercy, He makes them feel the fire of judgment, to urge them to turn to Him who hath power over these plagues.

And even here we see again another warning to flee from the wrath to come, while yet there is time and place for repentance. But such is the power of sin to hold sinners in sin, that merciful warning, even when life is not worth the living, leads not to repentance, but to deeper soul-hardening expressed in blasphemy.

FALLACY OF PURGATORY.

We may surely learn from this the fallacy of the doctrine of a purgatory. Penal fires do not purify. In them sin becomes calcined and embittered, and survives to be more exceeding sinful. Nothing can bring it to an end, and cancel it, but the precious blood of Christ. And the eternal Word of the living God declares that the blood of Christ is manifested for you who by Him (Christ) do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God (1 Pet. i. 18-21). Such have purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, and such are born again (1 Pet. i. 22, 23), and shall never perish (John iii. 16; and x. 27, 28).

INSURRECTION OF THE JEWS.

After gratifying his greed for self-glorification, and his blasphemous pride, in being worshipped as divine in the Holy of Holies, in Jerusalem, this great World-Emperor will leave the place of worship

for the seat of government, or some other part of his vast dominions. Then the Jews will determine to resist, by force of arms, any attempt on his part to return. At all events, they are in possession of their land and their city, and have a place of their own. The Emperor who gave them all this has himself broken the covenant; they will owe him allegiance no more. If only they had the God of Israel for their help, how certainly could they hold their country against all the world; but their afflictions are even yet not full.

Their very place in the land is due to their compact with the enemy of God; how, then, can they look to the God of Abraham to defend them? The vials of His wrath are still being outpoured, and new days bring fresh troubles. Spirits of devils go out in the earth and prepare men's minds for a vast combination of the world-powers against the Jews (Rev. xvi. 13, 14).

JEWS TO BE SUBJUGATED.

The movement begins with a combination of unclean spirits proceeding from Satan, the beast, and the false prophet—and so a scheme is conceived in this triumvirate of wickedness which quickly grows in the minds of those who are carried captive by the devil at his will.

This inward working of evil soon manifests itself in outward events. The Emperor decides, and the world approves, that the rebellious Jews must be subjugated. There shall be a union of all military forces, and the combined armies of

the world shall move against Jerusalem. How men will glory in this grand concentration of the powers of the world!

Since the world began was never such an army seen. Magnificent is the display of power, science, wealth, all moving at the will of one Satan-possessed man. The world's religion is fully represented in the person of the false prophet, who is always in close attendance on the Emperor, and who is called in the Bible "the Antichrist," "the man of sin," "that wicked one," now fully revealed. False religion is marked by even a greater extreme of wickedness than is reached by the embodiment of worldly pride and self-glory.

But while the world is glorying in this display of man's power and skill, knowledge and greatness, dense is the moral darkness, and deeper still the ignorance that knows not that it is written, "The day of the Lord cometh . . . for *I will gather* all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zech. xiv. 1, 2). So these evil spirits do but carry out the purposes of Almighty God.

Once more the kings of the earth, the great men, the chief captains, and all their mighty armaments are gathered together against THE LORD, and against His Christ, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts iv. 28). And this time it is not to issue in the crucifixion of Jesus, but in the destruction of His bitterest foes. While they concentrate, and move the vast forces of the

world towards the Jewish capital, they know not that the armies of heaven are at the very same time marshalling to meet them; so that for once all the universe shall know that in the thing wherein Satan, fallen angels, and rebellious men dealt proudly, God was "above them" (Exod. xviii. 11).

The Jews have not long enjoyed the crowning of their bright Zionist hopes. They have their long-desired city, but already their temple has been desecrated by a hated idolatrous worship; now they see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, and the desolation thereof is nigh (Luke xxi. 20).

THE LAST SIEGE OF JERUSALEM.

The confederated armies take up their position. The siege begins. Soon the city is taken (Zech. xiv. 2). Pillage and outrage immediately follow, and half the surviving inhabitants are doomed to captivity.

Exultation runs high in the conquering hosts. Military honours are accorded to the Emperor, in the same city where divine honours were given a short time before. He receives the adulation of the world. Who is like unto him? Who is able to make war with him? The world wonders after him (Rev. xiii. 3, 4).

THE SEVENTY WEEKS COMPLETED.

But the forty-two months are fulfilled; the allotted twelve hundred and sixty days of power for Satan's king are numbered to the very last.

Daniel's last week is completed. The war has ended in the desolation of the city (Dan. ix. 26). The consummation comes, and that which the Almighty has determined is about to be poured out upon the desolator (Dan. ix. 27, R.V.).

CHAPTER IX.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.

HILE the conquering hosts are even yet rejoicing in the pride and flush of victory, and the false prophet is devising more honours for the idol of the world, a world which now lies at his feet, suddenly the sun darkens; evening falls, and the moon has ceased to shine. Presently men become conscious of another light beginning to dispel the gloom; brighter and brighter it grows; a strange, wonderful light is filling the heavens, enveloping the earth. The brilliance increases; every eye, every attention, is attracted, absorbed, rivetted; it is an outshining. Bright clouds seem to form a centre of radiance; there is a coming glory, coming nearer, coming swiftly; there is no need to say, for all at once everyone knows, every eye sees Him: the Son of Man coming in His glory.

The noise of the merry-making and the revelry, and the cries of the vanquished, have suddenly ceased. The glorious scene is all too bright for mortal eyes, but they can see there are serried ranks of the angelic armies surrounding the Lord of Hosts (Matt. xxv. 31). Nearer still to the Person of the King are beings robed in dazzling

light. He is their life, and they shine in His glory (Col. iii. 4). These are the translated saints who are coming with Him (Zech. xiv. 5 ; Jude 14). Of them it is written, they "shall ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 17). But who shall describe the appearance of the Man Christ Jesus? His countenance is as the sun shineth in his strength (Rev. i. 16). His stature is radiant with out-shining glory; as the appearance of the rainbow in the heavens, so is the brightness of the appearance of the glory of the Lord Ezek. i. 28). And all men know this is

THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

He descends down, down, down, till His feet are standing on the Mount of Olives. The earth quakes at His presence, and the mountain rends in twain. Men flee in terror under the overwhelming manifestation of power and majesty. But while He has appeared for the deliverance and joy of His people (Joel ii. 32 ; Isa. lxvi. 5), all the kindreds of the earth are wailing because of Him (Rev. i. 7).

One proud, relentless spirit is undismayed, unabashed, and with his tireless hate for the Son of God, and his power over the hearts of fallen men, Satan rallies the creature to whom he has given all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and he, in turn, together with the world-loved leader of his worship, determines to array the forces of the earth against the hosts of heaven (Rev. xix. 19).

ARMAGEDDON.

And so the great king of all the world and his false prophet lead "the kings of the earth and their armies" to make war against the "King of kings and Lord of lords"; but the time has come for the creature to prove the power of his Creator, whom he has too long despised. The beast is taken; the false prophet, too, at the command of the Lord; and both are cast alive and together into a lake of fire. They pass without dying out of this life into the second death. One word from the lips of the King, and the vast conquering armies of the world have perished; their pride is withered, their dead bodies are but carrion for birds of prey (Rev. xvi. 14, 16; xix. 19-21).

SATAN BOUND.

Another mighty angel descends at the bidding of the Master of heaven and earth, arrests Satan himself, and casts him bound with a great chain into the bottomless pit, there to lie chained, under the seal of God, sentenced to a thousand years of imprisonment (Rev. xx. 1-3). It seems as if God would give him time to think, that even he might repent if he would. In all this it is manifested what Jesus said before He left His disciples to return to His Father, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18).

PROPHETIC WORDS.

How many Scriptures converge upon this glorious and yet terrific scene:—

Jude 14: gives Enoch's first prophecy proclaimed in the days of Adam, warning all men, in all ages, through all time, to repent and seek God's mercy. "The Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment."

Dan. vii. 13: In the vision Daniel saw the Son of Man come in the clouds of heaven. No doubt the Lord made reference to these words in Matt. xxiv. 29, 30; xxvi. 64; and Mark xiv. 62.

Rev. xix. 11: The heavens are opened for His going forth.

Matt. xxv. 31: When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him.

Luke xix. 15: When He was returned, having received the kingdom. In this chapter the Lord Jesus is set forth as *the King* (Luke xix. 38). Having returned, He calls His enemies before Him (xix. 27).

Matt. xxiv. 27: His coming is likened (Luke xvii. 24) to the lightning, seen universally, and under the whole heaven.

Ezek. xliii. 2: The earth shines with His glory.

Titus ii. 13: We look for the blessed hope of His coming to receive us to Himself in the clouds, and further still we look for the outshining of the glory of the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ upon this very earth, in this great day of the Lord.

Zech. xiv. 4: The mountain range of Olivet is rent under His feet.

Ps. cxiv. 7: Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.

2 Thess. i. 7 : The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance.

2 Thess. ii. 8 : That wicked one is destroyed with the brightness of His coming.

2 Thess. i. 10 : The Lord shall be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day.

We have previously traced the series of heavenly scenes from the moment of meeting our Lord in the air to the opening of the heavens (Rev. xix. 11), and the return to earth of the King of kings, when His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. xiv. 4). We have now also traced the events to be fulfilled on the earth in the same period of time, after the removal of the Lord's people, until He is seen coming in the clouds, and His feet touch Mount Olivet.

COMPLETION OF THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

No sooner do we read that Satan is bound for the thousand years, but it follows that the blessed dead, who suffered for their allegiance to Christ during the reign of Satan's king, and died in the Lord (Rev. xiv. 13), are raised to life again (Rev. xx. 4).

Through Satan's malignant hatred they were slain, but now Satan is bound, and they live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

This makes another company added to the King's Court. The heavenly saints have returned with Him from heaven, but these raised martyrs are presented to Him on earth.

When this last company are raised, we read the significant words, "This is the first resurrection" (Rev. xx. 5). These are the last to be included in the "Resurrection of the just" (Acts xxiv. 15); the last to partake with those Daniel describes as "some who awake to everlasting life" (Dan. xii. 2).

From this time onward, no loyal subject of Jesus will ever die; and the only resurrection to take place after this is that of the dead, to stand before the Great White Throne, the resurrection of judgment.

We can now trace the truth of the resurrection of the just:—

Firstly—Christ the Firstfruits (1 Cor. xv. 23).

Secondly—Afterwards they that are Christ's at His appearing (1 Cor. xv. 23).

Lastly—Them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus (Rev. xx. 4).

"This is the first resurrection." These words cover the whole, and mark the completion of the resurrection of the just to life everlasting. It is compared to a harvest, which has its firstfruits, then the great ingathering, and lastly the gleaning.

It is not described as a resurrection *of* the dead, which would imply all the dead, because many remain still untouched by resurrection power. It is a resurrection out from among the dead, because the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished (Rev. xx. 5).

This places a thousand years between the resurrection of the just and that of the unjust (Acts xxiv. 15); between those who awake to everlasting life and those who awake to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. xii. 2); between the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment (John v. 29).

CONVERSION OF THE JEWISH REMNANT.

Another wonderful event is to have its blessed fulfilment at this time. When the Lord shall have suddenly appeared, to the deliverance of His people at Jerusalem, and to the destruction of their enemies, they will recognise in their mighty and heavenly Deliverer the very Jesus of Nazareth they have so long and persistently hated and denied. What an awakening for their souls! What deep repentance will follow! What an overwhelming sense of shame and sorrow, uprooting all their deep-seated prejudice and tradition! A universal conviction, and real conversion, results; and they find in Christ Jesus their true God and promised Messiah.

Zechariah gives the prophecy in lovely terms and great detail in chapters xii. and xiii. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. xii. 10). "They shall call upon My Name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The LORD is my God" (Zech. xiii. 9).

All individuals will be included in this general and national repentance and conversion, and so

deep will be the work of the Spirit in their hearts, that they will never again be alienated from their King, their Saviour, and their God. Then shall Joel's words also be fulfilled: "For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call" (Joel ii. 32).

Multitudes of Jews will have perished during the awful judgments and days of tribulation before the King came; but some will survive. These, we understand, are the Remnant so often mentioned in the prophets.

Zech. xiv. is the great chapter which describes the Lord's actual arrival on this earth, when His feet shall once again stand on the Mount of Olives. Doubtless it is unchanged since the day of His ascension, and will remain so until He returns.

But as His feet touch the Mount, it will rend with sudden convulsion, cleft by a terrible earthquake, to the dismay of His adversaries; but answering the prayer of the prophet, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence" (Isa. lxiv. 1). Then will the nations tremble that have gathered together to the siege of Jerusalem.

Terrifying to enemies at the moment, it is nevertheless part of a grand scheme of preparation for the kingdom of Christ. Jerusalem that is now built about Mount Zion is not large enough for the metropolis of the world for a thousand years;

moreover, the precipitous ground does not admit of indefinite extension of the city. So the lower grounds are to be "lifted up," and a plateau formed, on which the extensions of the city can be built later on. And although uplifted by an earthquake, or volcanic eruption, nevertheless these grounds may be safely built on, because God has said so ; and by trusting to this foundation the builders may show their faith in God and His word (Zech. xiv. 10, 11).

The Lord has now come in His glory, accompanied by saints and angels. The Man of Sin and the Imperial Ruler of the earth are cast alive into the lake of fire. The Jews have acknowledged their Messiah. Now He shall sit on the throne of His glory (Matt. xxv. 31).

THE JUDGMENT OF LIVING NATIONS.

We have searched out many Scriptures bearing on this great event, so long prophesied of, so long delayed through the longsuffering of God. And this longsuffering is mercy and salvation, as millions have proved to their eternal happiness.

But the Lord has declared the day is fixed by appointment of the Father, and He, the Judge of all the earth, is ready to fulfil His will, whether as Redeemer or as Judge (Acts x. 42 ; 2 Tim. iv. 1 ; 1 Pet. iv. 5).

The fullest prophecy of this awful judgment is given by our Lord Himself, as recorded in Matt. xxv. 31, to the end.

We referred to this previously when considering

the coming of the Lord as the Judge, but we must give further attention to His words.

The Lord foretells the gathering before Him of all nations; how they will be divided, separated, and placed—some on His right hand, and some on the left. In His charge to each company He declares how His messengers had been received or refused. In receiving His servants He had been received and rightly treated; in rejecting His servants they had rejected Him. We learn that this judgment is both comprehensive and national, embracing the whole human race; and also that it is detailed and personal.

"Before Him shall be gathered *all nations*"; "Shall gather out of His kingdom *all* things that offend, and *them* which do iniquity" (Matt. xiii. 41). These words clearly show that the judgment will include all who are alive on the earth at the time. "For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat" shows that the judgments will discriminate the actions of individuals.

A nation does not give a man a supper at the moment he comes to a door; but some one person can do this, and bestow a coat on the King's messenger, when he brings his message. Thus the judgment is narrowed down to definite acts done personally.

The prophet Joel calls this day of judgment the great and terrible day of the Lord, but all who call on His name will be delivered (Joel ii. 31, 32), and this great day identifies it as the time

when fallen angels will be included in the universal judgment of the living (Jude 6).

THE BLESSING.

Full of cogent meaning are the words addressed by the Lord Jesus to those who stand on His right hand: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34).

Of the saints of the current dispensation it is said, God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. i. 4). Taking the foundation of the world as a fixed point of time, we were chosen before it; and the earthly kingdom was prepared for the earthly saints since that time.

This makes a marked distinction in the predestination of the heavenly and earthly families of God; differing in time, differing in blessing, and differing in position.

Nevertheless, those on the right hand are blessed of the Father; and it is added that they enter into life eternal. Hence, these saints are endowed with immortality, in an earthly, human constitution. Probably this state is similar in some respects to that of Adam before he fell, but differing in the all-important particular that these blessed ones are not liable to fall as Adam did, seeing they have entered into eternal life.

THE CURSE.

Corresponding with the eternal blessedness of those on the right hand is the eternal doom

of those on the left. Inconceivably dreadful are the words of the curse: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. xxv. 41). "And they go away into everlasting punishment" (ver. 46).

This is, no doubt, the curse which is the last word of the Old Testament (Mal. iv. 6). Through the preaching of Elijah, and other witnesses like him, during the last days between the translation of the heavenly saints and the Lord's return to the Mount of Olives, the multitude on the right hand will have been converted, and the whole earth will not be smitten with the curse, but only that unrepentant part of it which is at last found on the left hand of the throne. So is fulfilled the prophecy of Mal. iv. 6. The Old Testament closes with the curse that must ultimately fall on sin. The New Testament closes with God's resource in a sinful world, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord declares the everlasting fire is "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). Although prepared for Satan, he is not the first to be consigned to that place of torment. The Beast and the False Prophet are first, and those from the left hand follow next. The devil himself is not cast there until after the thousand years have run their course (Rev. xx. 10). In this last passage it is added, "And *they* shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (R.V.). The word "*they*" includes the Beast,

the False Prophet, and Satan. From these combined passages it is made certain that the everlasting fire is a place of torment of endless duration, in which fallen angels and lost men survive.

It has been God's revealed will to keep this terrible day of the Lord before the minds of all men throughout the whole course of time, and to make His own people the responsible witnesses of the coming judgment from which they themselves have been saved. God's object is declared again and again, that men may be warned in time, and may seek and find His great salvation.

The prophet Joel supplies some further details of this great day of judgment. In Joel ii. 32, we read of the deliverance of the Jewish remnant who survive the siege of Jerusalem. The next chapter foretells the great judgment of the nations. It defines the actual site, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where the throne of His glory will be set (Joel iii. 12). The multitudes are described, and the final decision of the eternal destiny of those assembled there (verse 14). The darkness of the sun and moon identifies this scene with so many other references (verse 15). Joel ii. and iii. and Matt. xxv. 31 exactly run together.

THE VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT.

Flowing down this valley is the brook Kedron; close by, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, is the never-to-be-forgotten Garden of Gethsemane. There the prayer of an-

guish went up to the Father; there the priests and elders of the Jews and their soldiers, guided by the traitor, came in the night to take Him. Another disciple drew his sword to defend his Master; but Jesus said, "Put up thy sword into the sheath. The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11.) "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. xxvi. 53).

And now, in the same valley, near to the same spot, He who humbled Himself is exalted. Jesus is there once more. There are attending on Him more than the twelve legions—the innumerable company of angels—not to defend Him, but to do His bidding. The cup given by His Father He drank, and the fruit of the travail of His soul is seen in the radiant throng now surrounding His Person. How wonderfully the ways of God work out!

Gethsemane, where by wicked hands Jesus was taken to be crucified and slain, is but a stone's cast from the throne of judgment, where all shall give account for what they have thought of Christ (Matt. xxii. 42).

RECOGNITIONS.

Let us try to contemplate this tremendous scene which will some day be enacted before our own eyes. The Lord will be the Judge, and we shall attend Him on the judgment throne; for, "so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 17).

Those who lived in generations long preceding the coming of Christ will have no acquaintanceship with any persons who stand in the judgment; but we who were alive and remained, and were translated without dying at the coming of the Lord, will see in those assembled multitudes the survivors of our own generation.

On the right will be those who, during the few last years, received the Gospel of the Kingdom, their numbers having been chiefly drawn from heathen lands.

On the left hand will stand the rejecters of the same Gospel; but also among them will be those who had previously rejected the Gospel of God's grace, and were consequently left behind when the Lord called away His believing people to meet Him in the air. Among this part of the left-hand company will not many be recognised by those who surround the King? Will conscience acquit them that they have done their utmost to warn these to flee from this day of wrath? or will it convict them that their manner of life on earth helped forward that neglect of Christ and of God's Word which at length has brought these persons to their awful and hopeless position? This reflection demands the earnest attention of God's people. Anyone who subjects his mind to these Scriptures will soon become assured that this issue is inevitable; and that there is deeper meaning than is often supposed in the words "Judge this rather, that

no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way" (Rom. xiv. 13); and, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Pet. iii. 11). "He that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (Matt. xii. 30).

While quite sure that the translated saints attending the King will be able to recognise former acquaintances among those who stand before Him, we are not so clear whether these will be equally able to recognise those they knew on earth in their changed and glorified state, and in the midst of the dazzling glory of the throne.

But if this should be so, we should suppose it would make the convictions of unfaithful Christians more grievous still, subjecting them to the bitterest reproaches of the lost. Even if we presume such a thing as this will not actually eventuate, nevertheless the minds of the glorified saints will be so perfectly stablished in righteousness that self-reproach will certainly be felt as justly due. If we would only face these facts, we should more truly apprehend how much the glory of God and welfare of fellow-mortals is concerned in the present faithfulness of our lives, although our personal salvation is assured by grace alone.

THE POPULATION OF THE KINGDOM.

The blessed from the right hand are called to inherit the millennial kingdom (Matt. xxv.

34), and go into life eternal as a righteous people (verse 46). These form part of the first population of the kingdom of Christ; the delivered Jewish remnant form another part; and there is yet another group to complete it.

ALL ISRAEL SAVED.

In Rom. x. 1, is the inspired record of an inspired prayer to God for Israel, that they may be saved. The answer is registered in the next chapter: "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 26).

This extends beyond the remnant of the house of David and of Judah, as is defined in Joel and Zechariah. The word concerns those ten tribes which were carried into captivity in the days of Hosea, king of Israel, taken away from their land by the king of Assyria, and placed by the river Gozan in Assyria (2 Kings xvii. 6), from which captivity their posterity has never yet been restored. The return of these captive tribes is as definitely foretold as is the deliverance of Judah and Jerusalem.

"Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation" (Isa. xlv. 17). "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa. xlv. 25). See also Isa. xlix. 9-13 and xix. 23. When this is accomplished, the original population of the kingdom will be made up.

CHAPTER X.

THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

OR unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Father of Eternity, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this" (Isa. ix. 6, 7).

This glorious prophecy opens up for us the grand subject of the kingdom of the Son of God, Son of David, Son of Man.

No doubt He reigns now in the hearts of His yielded and subject people. But this Scripture foretells His reign on

THE THRONE OF DAVID.

The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David (Luke i. 32). This is the emphatic Word of God by the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mother. His name Jesus, the Son of the Highest, is given in the same Scripture, and exactly corresponds with the prophecy of Isa. ix.

The Child has been born, the Son has been

given, but He has not yet ascended the throne of David in Jerusalem.

The part fulfilment of this grand prophecy is an earnest of its completion.

We have traced the prophecies of His descent from heaven to the Mount of Olives, the destruction of the great powers of the world, the great judgment of the nations, and now follows in due order the establishment of the kingdom. And first we note it is an

ABSOLUTE MONARCHY

centred in the person of the King of kings and Lord of lords. His coronation has taken place in heaven before He descends to take His earthly throne. As He leaves the heavens He is already crowned with many crowns (Rev. xix. 12, 16).

He is revealed on earth as the One All-glorious, visible God and Man in one Person. Seen of angels, manifested as God in human form, all men will see Him too (Rev. i. 7). All mankind that has survived the Judgment will own Him as Saviour, Lord, and God.

The unrepentant and rebellious will already have seen Him, wondered at His reality, glory, and power, and their own senseless folly, and will have perished (Acts xiii. 40, 41).

No hostile spirit breathes throughout the whole earth—and it now rests with Him, the acknowledged Lord of all, to order His kingdom, and to establish it with Justice and with Judgment.

A sceptre of righteousness characterises

His rule (Heb. i. 8). Once while Sin was reigning, Jesus suffered for righteousness' sake; and His people have suffered, after Him, for righteousness, and for Christ's sake (Phil. i. 29); suffering persecution (2 Tim. iii. 12); suffering wrongfully (1 Pet. ii. 19), as partakers of Christ's sufferings (1 Pet. iv. 13); but now all is reversed. Righteousness is reigning, and no one will suffer, except for sin's sake; for Christ's glory is revealed; and His suffering people are relieved, and rejoice with exceeding joy. The Sceptre of righteousness will put down sin, as by a rod of iron, wielded by Divine power and authority. But while this dominion is Divine, the ordering of the kingdom will be with human organisation. Local governors will be appointed (Luke xix. 17, 19)—officers of state having positions of trust in charge of affairs—over many things (Matt. xxv. 21, 23). These posts of honour are given by the King as rewords for devoted, faithful, personal service.

The seat of government is Jerusalem (Zech. xiv. 17). From thence shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord (Isa. ii. 3; Micah iv. 2). To that centre the nations will seek, and come up to worship and learn God's ways.

The whole earth will be delivered from Satan's temptations and bondage, for he is himself bound and imprisoned.

The extension of organised government will apparently grow outward from Jerusalem. The King will carry on His plans till order

is established everywhere ; and so completely subject will all people be, that even in the remote islands of the sea they will send for directions to Jerusalem, and await the orders of the King. "The isles shall wait for His law" (Isa. xlii. 4). Directly resulting from the order, justice, and good government will be

UNDISTURBED PEACE

among men ; and of the increase of His Peace there shall be no end. Never until then will the earth experience the blessings of peace and righteousness. Wonderful and blessed time, when He to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, shall take His great power and personally reign over all the earth which has been for so long misgoverned (Zech. xiv. 9 ; Rev. xi. 17). It will be the joy, and a fresh theme in the worship of the enthroned elders, to see these glorious prophecies unfolding in their fulfilment before their very eyes.

The duration of the reign of Christ on this present earth is fixed at

A THOUSAND YEARS.

Rev. xx. is the only chapter in the Bible where this is stated, and here it is repeated six times. The period is named once in each verse from the 2nd to 7th inclusive ; and several truths concerning the Millennial reign are here given :

Verse 2: For the thousand years of the reign of Jesus, Satan is bound, shut in the pit, and sealed there with the seal of God.

Verse 3: He is so effectually imprisoned, and held under the authority of the King, that he cannot work any more mischief among men, but will be loosed when the King chooses after the thousand years have run.

The Seal is in striking contrast to Satan's attempt upon the Person of Christ through the agency of the men he deceived.

By wicked hands Jesus was crucified, laid in the grave, and sealed there; but He rose triumphant after three days, in accordance with His own word. The grave-wrappings that were entwined around head and body in many-times-winded folds, binding hand and foot, and holding limbs unmovable, in a moment are left behind with not one fold unwound. The great stone covering the grave's mouth is there unmoved, and the Seal of man's authority is still intact. Craven hirelings of the Priesthood watch on in futile wakefulness, unconscious that the King has passed forth from His Sabbath resting-place.

The Angel of the Lord descends with the authority of God, rolls back the stone, and seats himself as in possession; and now is revealed the vacant tomb. The still-closely-wound wrappings bear their silent but unmistakable witness to the power and glory of the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. i.).

But Satan cannot pass the Seal of Jesus, neither by device nor power, for a thousand

years, nor even then, until the power that bound him looses him.

Verse 4: Those faithful martyrs who suffered death at the hands of Satan's wicked king are raised from the dead, and while their arch-enemy languishes in the bottomless pit, they live and reign with Christ.

Verse 5: The thousand years intervene between the resurrection of the martyred saints, and the rest of the dead, who are to be raised again for their final judgment at the end.

Verse 6: These raised ones are declared to be blessed and holy, and are brought into the circle of the King's court, to be associated with Him in the Government—while other earthly saints are the governed ones.

Verse 7: Here commences the description of the doings of Satan when loosed. It will then be made manifest whether so long a solitary confinement will soften the heart, subdue the will, and induce the author of rebellion to repent.

But soon it is shown that his original sin of rebellion is strong in him still, his power over men to deceive them is great as of old; he organises and leads the last final outbreak of evil, and so brings to its completion the history of sin, in himself, fallen angels, and fallen men.

From this glimpse of the revelation of the thousand years we will return, and learn a little more of the glories of the kingdom when ordered and established in the Person of Christ.

He is pre-eminently

THE KING OF ISRAEL

as well as King over all the earth. Consequently, Israel will be the head of the nations. The Lord has promised to set Israel on high above all the nations of the earth (Deut. xxviii.), and His words shall be fulfilled. In the days of Solomon, for a brief space, this seemed to approach fulfilment; but even then it was incomplete and transient.

Under the hand of the true King of Peace this shall be fulfilled, and Israel shall be the head, and not the tail; above only, and not beneath (ver. 13). The Gentiles will be servants to the Israelites (Isa. lxi. 5).

In another respect the distinction between Israel and other nations is yet more abundantly marked. We have seen that all Israel shall be saved

THE REDEEMER SHALL COME TO ZION,

and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Isa. lix. 20; Rom. xi. 26). And more than this, there is the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit to them, to their children, and children's children for ever (Isa. lix. 21). And so Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end (Isa. xlv. 17).

This wondrous blessing is assured to all of them, for "in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (ver. 25).

These Scriptures therefore declare, for Israel's race, universal salvation for soul and

body, when the Deliverer comes to Mount Zion.

Again, among the favoured people of Israel,

THE HOUSE OF DAVID

will be given pre-eminence (Zech. xii. 7, 8); so much so that the people of Judah shall be saved before the House of David, in order to prevent the greater glory of David's people becoming the occasion of self-exaltation. This blessing of David's House is, doubtless, ordained because of the closer natural relationship of this family with the King Himself.

THE BLESSING OF THE GENTILES.

In contrast with the universal salvation of the people of Israel throughout their successive generations, the Gentiles, even under the millennial reign, will need to be converted, if they are to be saved and delivered from the sinfulness of their nature; and those who do believe in Jesus as their Saviour, as well as being subject to His rule as their King, will never die, but live eternally blest in Him. The blessing of the right hand of the throne will extend to them: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"; and they, too, will, like their parents, inherit eternal life (see Matt. xxv. 34, 46).

From the moment the King takes the throne of His earthly kingdom there will be no death for loyal subjects.

Death will only come as the judgment of God upon the unregenerate, who remain per-

sistently alienated from God in their hearts.

The death of those who are not born again through faith in Jesus, will be the recurring lesson before the eyes and hearts of all intelligent creatures that no one is safe from sin and its consequences unless he is spiritually conformed to the will of God and under the sway of the constraining love of Christ.

HEAVEN AND EARTH BLEST IN CHRIST.

Thus God's dealing with our sinful race will be a blessing to unfallen heavenly hosts, in securing them from another rebellion, and downfall from their blessed state, after the example of Satan and his angels. Manifestation of power may appal and control, but love binds for ever in an indissoluble bond that only grows in intensity, and which never fails (1 Cor. xiii. 8).

The sympathy of heavenly beings with the human race in the display of God's grace, is shown in the angel that brought the glad tidings of great joy to all people at the birth of the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord; and in the multitude of the heavenly host praising God in that outburst of heavenly worship, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

And again, when the new song is at last sung in heaven, it is the song of the Seraphim, with the redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, uniting in the great chorus of praise to the

Redeemer—the Lamb that was slain.

This same glorious and far-reaching truth is expressed in the unfolding of the mystery of God's purpose, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth (Eph. i. 10). So that when, in the ages to come, God displays the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus (Eph. ii. 7), this will not awaken envy in the angels' hearts, but draw them, as well as grateful man, into the deep ocean of the love of God ; and the glory of the universe will be the glory of redeeming love. Thus on the one hand there will be the never-to-be-forgotten lesson of the miseries of sin, that it may be for ever shunned ; and, on the other, the ever-deepening enjoyment of the love of God in Christ. Lessons not only written down in words, but known by actual experience in the hearts of angels and of men.

WORSHIP OF THE KING.

Another glory of the Millennial Age will be the worship of the Lord the King, as the true and visible God, dwelling as a Man among men once more. Ps. xxii., which foretells the Crucifixion down to ver. 21, and the resurrection in ver. 22, anticipates the kingdom in verses 27, 28. "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn to the Lord ; and all kindreds of the nations shall worship before

Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Governor among the nations."

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined" (Ps. l. 2).

The whole of Psalm lxxii. is Millennial, concluding with "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory" (Ps. lxxii. 18, 19).

"The Lord reigneth; the Lord is great in Zion" (Ps. xcix. 1, 2).

"Worship at His footstool" (ver. 5).

"Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill" (ver. 9).

Zechariah xiv. 16: "Every one that is left . . . shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts," and the 17th verse says, "Unto Jerusalem." So the King is worshipped as God, the Lord of hosts.

THE MILLENNIAL TEMPLE.

Ezekiel gives a wonderful and detailed description of the Temple that is to be rebuilt on Mount Zion, which is to be the place of worship of the divine King of glory, upon earth. He describes the court, the house, and the most holy place, and the glorious entry of the Lord into His sanctuary, coming by way of the East, and the earth shining with His glory (Ezek. xliii. 1-5).

The same prophet tells of the restoration of the priesthood under the sons of Zadoc; and

the revival of the temple services and the sacrifices—these will not be typical of Christ's death, as of old, but memorials of accomplished atonement (Ezek. xliv.).

RE-DIVISION OF LAND.

He describes also the re-division of the land of Canaan, in parallel blocks, allowing for the extension of tribal inheritances without trenching upon their neighbours (Ezek. xlviii.), until they cover the vast desert, and make it blossom as the rose (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2).

Zechariah describes the annual convention of all nations at Jerusalem to keep the

FEAST OF TABERNACLES,

and how every vessel in the homes of the people, as well as the vessels of the Temple, shall be holiness unto the Lord. The very amusements of the wealthy shall be equally sanctified to Him. What a contrast to all around us to-day! And so the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Zech. xiv. 16; Isa. xi. 9; Hab. ii. 14).

The Feast of Tabernacles was ordained to be a great annual festival, and season of national rejoicing in God's blessing, at the ingathering of the harvest (Exod. xxxiv. 22; Lev. xxiii. 39; Deut. xvi. 13-16).

It was to last eight days; special offerings were ordained for each day; the people were to make booths of branches of trees, and live in them during the Feast, a memorial of the time when they had no proper dwelling-houses, but lived in booths during their desert jour-

neyings, when they came up out of Egypt.

When our Lord was on earth, ignored, despised, and rejected of men, and even His brethren disbelieving His claim to the Messiahship, this Feast was still observed by the Jews (John vii. 2-10). The Lord Jesus could not enter into the scene as though all were right in God's sight; but He would attend the Feast secretly because of the word in Deut. xvi. 16, "All thy males shall appear before God in the place which He shall choose."

He said to His brethren,

"MY TIME IS NOT YET COME."

We can realise a deep meaning in these words as we read of the Feast of Tabernacles in Zech. xiv. 16. When His time, the time of His earthly glory, is come, all nations of the whole earth shall come up to the Royal City to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

What a scene of joy and glory that will be! God and man met together! and God and man united in the Person of Jesus. God is glorified, and man is blest. All nations assemble at the feet of the King of glory to do Him honour. God approachable, accessible, loving and gracious, honoured and beloved. The One adored of all heaven, come down to earth to be seen and known and loved by men, and to fill all hearts with joy. Then will the great universe unite to bless the sacred Name of Him that sits upon THE THRONE, and join to praise the Lamb.

It will be a feast of ingathering in the fullest, truest sense, for the harvest of salvation has been gathered in. Heavenly hosts, Israel, and Gentiles will rejoice together. No doubt the Word of God will be read to the assembled multitudes, as was specially ordered in Deut. xxxi. 10-13.

Once it is recorded how this was done, when Ezra read out of the Book from the morning until mid-day; when all the people stood up while the reading continued (Neh. viii.), and then went their way to eat and to drink, to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them, and that "the joy of the Lord was their strength."

Bright and lovely promise of coming days! Shall we not pray again, "Hallowed be Thy Name! Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"?

Isaiah tells how "the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this" (Isa. ix. 7). Short words fraught with a depth of meaning. It is

THE FATHER'S DELIGHT

in His only-begotten Son that will move Him to bring all this to pass in its appointed time.

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand" (John iii. 35). All the glory, honour, happiness, and love of heaven and earth, is to be outpoured for Him who is all the delight of His Father, and it will fill full the delight of all His creatures, to see it all made good.

HOUR OF HIS JOY, AND TIME OF HIS GLORY.

We noticed before how at the Cana wedding-feast Jesus anticipated the joy of His own marriage, according to Rev. xix. 7, when He said, "Mine hour is not yet come" (John ii. 4).

So, again, in view of the feast of Tabernacles, He said, "My time is not yet come" (John vii. 6). On his way to the cross, He held the resulting joy in view (Heb. xii. 2), and could anticipate the "hour" of consummation of His love and joy in His Church, and His "time" of glory in the very world which was then rejecting Him with scorn.

THE FIRST ADAM AND THE LAST.

When God created Adam, He gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Gen. i. 28). Thus he was made the head of the earthly creation. When he departed from his allegiance to his Maker, all the nether creation was involved in his fall. The very ground was cursed for his sake; it began to bring forth thorns and thistles, bearing witness to the curse; and while he tilled the ground for his food, it was waiting to become his grave (Gen. iii. 17-19). The bondage of corruption, with all its preliminary suffering and pain, fell on the creatures that were under Adam's dominion.

But at the very time when God imposed the penalties of Adam's sin, we are told how He anticipated, with the hope of God, the great deliverance His Son should bring to the sin-

burdened earth (Rom. viii. 20, 21, R.V.). A great emancipation was then determined from all the bondage under which the animal and vegetable creation still labours. It waits, under the hope of God, until the King of Righteousness takes His rightful place among men, and righteousness is enthroned upon earth, instead of sin, which now reigns to death (Rom. v. 21.) And the earth, once cursed for the first man's sin, shall yet be blessed in the Second Man's righteousness, and shall rejoice in more than Eden's blessings.

His people "shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; mountains and hills shall break forth before them into singing, and all the trees of the forest shall rejoice. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; instead of the thorny brier, the myrtle-tree. It shall be to the Lord for a name and an everlasting sign" (Isa. lv. 12, 13).

The blight on the fields shall cease, and the earth shall yield her increase as never before; and in such wonderful bounty, that the loss of the harvests in thousands of former years shall be given back to the reapers in the years to come (Joel ii. 21-26).

All this results because the earth is governed at last by "One who rules in the fear of God" (2 Sam. xxiii. 3, R.V.); by One on whom rests the Spirit of the fear of the Lord (Isa. xi. 2, 3); the Dove who abides upon Jesus (John i. 32). Righteousness and faithfulness are enthroned in Him (Isa. xi. 5, 9). And while the

lower creation ceases its groaning, none shall hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord.

The joy of God and men in this blessing of the Millennial reign is sung in Isa. lxv. 19-25. No process of evolution, no progress of civilisation, evangelisation of nations, will ever accomplish this. The curse spoken by God because of man's sin will be on this earth until it is lifted off by Jesus, at His coming again. To establish His right to do this, He came the first time to die for sinners. His right to reverse the decree of Eden has been acknowledged since God welcomed Him to His own right hand in glory, as the Risen One.

The blessing that shall supersede the curse is due solely to the redeeming, atoning death of Christ, and to His glorious resurrection from the dead, by which He has already righteously vanquished sin, and will continue to establish His resurrection life, His righteousness and holiness, in all who yield Him their hearts' allegiance. And then through these regenerated lives He will bless the world.

DOMINION OF THE LORD JESUS (Psa. lxxii. 8).

Human language is exhausted in the prophecies of the coming days of the reign of the Lord Jesus; imagination fails to picture the scenes foretold. Like a golden thread the promises run through the entire Scripture, but here and there flash forth with transcendent lustre.

Judgment and justice are the habitation of His

Throne ; not only for rich and great, but the poor will have special care (Psa. lxxii. 2, 4, 12-14).

Oppression is put down (ver. 4).

Peace and righteousness are universal (ver. 7).

Grace and plenteous blessing shall come down with Him, like rain on the mown grass, as the showers that make life to spring.

In His days shall the righteous flourish. His dominion shall embrace all the empires of the world.

His name shall endure for ever. All shall be blessed in Him, all nations shall call Him blessed.

Blessed be His glorious name for ever! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory.

So ended the prayers of David, merged in the prophecy of Jesus, who shall succeed to his throne (Psa. lxxii.).

Isaiah sees the bright glory of the King and His Royal Court, outshining the noonday sun (Isa. xxiv. 23).

Dazzling was the brightness that blinded Saul on the road to Damascus ; yet so graciously softened will that same Light be in days to come, that blind eyes will be opened to see Jesus, like him of the ninth of John. Deaf ears unstopped will hear the voice of Jesus, and lips that were dumb will be opened to sing His praise, and to join in the anthems of joy which fill the City and Temple Courts.

The Spirit of God, once more outpoured, will give utterance of the wonderful works of God

(Joel ii. 28 ; Acts ii. 11). All loyal hearts are filled with gladness, and lives are filled with fruits of righteousness (Isa. xxxii. 15). A great highway of holiness will be made for men to walk in before God, superseding the broad road that once led to destruction (Isa. xxxv. 8).

The redeemed of the Lord shall walk there. When it is realised that suffering, sickness, and death have ceased, and that death is really swallowed up in victory, grateful hearts will throng the Courts of the House of God, with songs of everlasting joy and gladness.

Streams of refreshing flow in the deserts and make them blossom like the rose ; sorrow and sighing flee away (Isa. xxxv.). Violence shall cease in the land of Israel. Their very walls are salvation, and their gates are praise. The sun is no more the light by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord Himself is their everlasting Light, and their God their glory. Thy people shall be all righteous, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified (Isa. lx.).

THE FIRST AND THE LAST (Rev. i.).

The King, born to reign, who holds the sceptre by appointment of God, is declared in heaven to be the only One found worthy to rule (Rev. v. 2, 5). He carries with ease the responsibilities of the universe, controlling by supreme will the ordinances of the heavens, the sweet influences of Pleiades, guiding Arcturus and the planets in their courses ; taking hold of the ends of the

earth, to shake the wicked out of it (Job xxxviii.).

One so great and glorious, divine and almighty, needs no barriers of pomp and ceremony to safeguard His dignity, or magnify His inherent glory.

Adored by heavenly seraphim, He can, nevertheless, be approached by a child. He once humbled Himself to the death of the cross, and can well afford to stoop again to the level of His people.

Recognised once more as Jesus of Nazareth, His gentle grace will be well remembered by those who long ago dwelt with Him in Galilee, and the same Jesus will renew the same loving-kindness to generations yet to come. He will stop His royal progress to speak with a poor soul by the wayside, as in Luke xix. 5, while an archangel stands by awaiting the commands of Him who holds the keys of Hades and of Death.

Infinitely blessed and glorious, gracious and tender, the Lord, the First and with the last (Isa. xli. 4), the Greatest, yet within reach of the least; listening to the lowliest need, meeting and satisfying, with a bounty regal and divine. Adapting His glorious intelligence to the fellowship and counsels of His Father, and yet able to descend to the capacity of a little child, and win its love.

BLESSING ABOUNDING AND INCREASING.

Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end, on the throne of David . . . (Isa. ix. 7).

"On the throne of David" defines the earthly kingdom. But when the Lord is King over all the earth, as Zechariah says (xiv. 9), there can be no more increase of *territory*, for the King has it all; still we can easily understand that, with the increasing *population*, His government will indefinitely extend. Millions will be born to learn the glorious Name of Melchizedec, King of Salem: King of Righteousness and King of Peace. And as they grow up to love Him, His government and peace will increase and multiply in their loyal hearts, and millions more lives will delight to live for Him, and so His peace will flow on like a river, glorious in its bright increase. A marvellous extension of glory to God and blessing to man will thus result in the increase of His government and peace, as the thousand years of righteousness and peace run on. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. ii. 14).

EARTHLY BLESSINGS AND HAPPINESS.

All the temporal blessings which men naturally enjoy are enjoyable because a beneficent Creator has designedly adapted the creatures He has brought into existence to the surroundings He has provided for them. Every truly good and pleasant thing has been created for the comfort, happiness, and pleasure of the creatures designed to use it. Every injurious thing is so solely as the result of the sin of angels or of men.

Even though sin has marred the perfection of God's handiwork, there remains abundant proof of the Creator's goodness and care for His creatures.

GOD'S DELIGHT IN HIS CREATURES' HAPPINESS.

The dragonfly dancing in the sunshine, the tiny fish flashing in the crystal stream, the hum of insect life on a summer evening, the song of birds, the scent of flowers, are witnesses, together with tens of thousands more, of the delight God has in diffusing pleasure among all living things. The higher the creature in the scale of creation, the greater the range of its natural enjoyments. God enters into the blessings of His works. The delights of His creatures in the things He made for their enjoyment are spoken of by Him in terms which abundantly unfold His delight in giving pleasure.

Satan-led souls charge Him with being hard, exacting, overbearing (Matt. xxv. 24), but no one else does.

When the active power of sin is suspended by the imprisonment of Satan in the bottomless pit, then will be seen how God delights in the happiness of His creatures. In the sufferings and death of Christ, God has suffered more than any creature ever can; and when righteousness is enthroned on earth, and sin put down, God will make happiness abound, and He will rejoice in His creatures' joy. He will make His people to sing for very joy of heart, and God Himself will joy over them with singing (Zeph. iii. 14-17).

Not only will swords be turned into pruning-hooks, because men shall not learn war any more, but the fruits will be abundant, and will repay the labour bestowed on the pruning of the trees. God will delight in the progress of men's affairs, take interest in their works, and help on their plans. He takes pleasure in their buildings and cultivations, arts and manufactures, and promises them long enjoyment of the produce of their happy industry (Isa. lxv. 21, 22).

Lovely are His expressions of delight in the happiness of family life, His watchful care over the home; and the little children have their own special place in His heart.

The very trees and verdure, scenery and climate, the sunshine, rain, wind, frost, and snow; treasures of heat and light; are all made to subserve and enhance the blessings God will shed abroad with lavish hand and loving heart, giving richly all things to enjoy, for comfort of body, happiness of mind, and joy of heart. He will even join with the farmer in working for the harvest in-gathering. Let him but plough his land, and God will feed his seed-basket (Deut. xxviii. 5). Let him cast in the seed, and God will soften the furrows, and water the ridges, and send His blessing into the very seeds, as they lie in the fertile earth (Psa. lxv. 10). Bright sunshine and soft showers will be made to alternate in the perfect time and amount that is required to bring fulness and perfection into the ripening ears. He

looks over the valleys clothed with waving golden corn with pleasure, in sympathy with men, and will protect from harm of elements these earthly treasures, till He rejoices with His people in the joy of harvest (Psa. lxv. 9-13 ; Isa. ix. 3, R.V.).

If difficulty should arise in treating the strange lands of the deserts, the cultivators can seek to Him to give understanding ; and He will instruct them and give counsel how to make the best of their ground, and the wilderness shall blossom as the rose (Isa. xxviii. 23-29, R.V.).

CHAPTER XI.

MILLENNIAL DECLENSION AND THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

T was with great enjoyment that we gathered up some of the Scriptures that foretell the blessings of the earth under the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ; and now we have to learn that across the brightness of the scene shadows will still be cast.

It may seem strange that any discordant note should jar on such world-embracing harmony and peace ; but it is plainly foretold that such will be. The beautiful millennial prophecy of Isa. lx. tells of the rising glory of the Lord, the Light of Israel; the building of the walls of Jerusalem, and her gates kept open perpetually, so that the forces of the nations and their kings may enter in ; and in the midst of all the joys and glories of the reign, we read, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish" (Isa. lx. 12).

Still more specific is the punishment decreed upon Egypt and other countries if their people will not acknowledge the King in the appointed manner, by assembling to worship Him at the great annual Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. xiv. 18).

The stern power of repression is described as

breaking the heathen like a potter's vessel (Ps. ii. 9); ruling all nations with a rod of iron (Rev. xii 5; xix. 15).

SIN AND DEATH.

As we search further we find there will be sin; and overt acts of sin and transgression of the laws will be punished with death (Isa. xi. 4).

A sinner still unconverted at a hundred years old will be accursed (Isa. lxv. 20).

Who are these whose sinful nature breaks out in sin or in life-long opposition to the King of Righteousness and Peace?

They cannot be of Israel's race, for they shall be "all righteous" (Isa. lx. 21); neither can they be those "blessed of the Father" who stood on the right hand of the King at the great judgment of all the Gentile nations (Matt. xxv. 34), for they were endowed with everlasting life (verse 46). Being Gentiles, they were strangers as compared with the chosen people of Israel; and while they themselves are eternally saved, it seems that some of their descendants will not follow in the same allegiance of heart, for we read in 2 Sam. xxii. 45 (margin), "The sons of the stranger shall yield

FEIGNED OBEDIENCE"

(also Ps. xviii. 44, margin), and while the people of the whole earth, as a general rule, love, honour, and obey their King with loyalty and fidelity, there will arise some day, among the Gentile children, some whose hearts are disloyal, and even

cherishing enmity against the Lord Jesus; and, as they dare not show it openly, they will yield feigned obedience (Ps. lxvi. 3).

DISAFFECTION SPREADS.

It is easy to understand that there will be a natural tendency for such hostile spirits to increase as the generations succeed one another during the thousand years.

If a man's heart cherishes evil thoughts about the King, it will not be surprising if some of his children follow the same way; and so we are prepared to learn that in the last generation of millennial subjects there will be a vast number of disaffected hearts, ready to fall an easy prey to Satan when he reappears on the scene to tempt them to rebellion.

In the ordinance of the sacrifices appointed for the Feast of Tabernacles, on the first day there were to be offered thirteen bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs; on the second day, twelve bullocks; and every day one less, till the bullocks had dwindled down to seven, on the seventh day of the Feast (Num. xxix. 12-32). The lambs and rams were maintained at the same number every day. We see in these the unvarying perfection of the sacrifice of Christ; but in the bullocks is typified the offerer's appreciation of Christ's work, and in this is found the human tendency to decline. So the very Feast of Tabernacles—the great world-festival of the Millennium—carries in its symbolism a prophecy of declension on the

part of human worshippers. The presence of sin and its punishment shows that, although righteousness is enthroned and supreme, it will not be absolutely universal throughout the empire.

The contrast with the present condition of things will be immense, for now sin reigns to death ; but when Jesus is Lord of all the earth righteousness will reign, and sin be suppressed by power.

SATAN LOOSED. STILL REBELLIOUS.

At length the glorious thousand years of the reign of the King in Jerusalem will reach the end long foreknown and foretold. Even ten centuries have an end in one last day.

The long sentence on the Spirit of Evil expires ; Satan is loosed out of his prison (Rev. xx. 7).

Will a thousand years of solitary confinement work a change of heart in him? Yet it should suffice to make him think, and see the hopelessness of persisting in working against God.

There is time enough for the first fury to cool down that might naturally arise when he finds the great chain coiling around him, and feels himself in the hands of an irresistible power that can bind him and cast him into prison with such marvellous ease.

Time is a wonderful subduer.

Will not centuries cool his passion, curb his pride, make reason prevail, and let wisdom teach the fear of the Lord? But no, all is in vain : as he went in, so he comes forth—a rebel in heart and incorrigible will

LOVING SUBJECTS.

But while Satan has been in prison, human affairs have not been standing still. Those who once heard the words that thrilled their souls as they stood at the King's right hand, "Come, ye blessed of My Father," have learned yet more of the depths of their meaning.

They had heard of Him by the hearing of the ear, and, receiving the message of His servants, yielded Him allegiance. Fierce was the trial of their faith, but they held fast, and at last He came, and they were delivered; and then their eyes saw Him, and the loyalty and devotion that had grown strong before, was now fused into love.

What words, "Blessed of My Father"! but what a Voice that uttered them! They had believed Him as Saviour, Redeemer, Deliverer; but at last they saw the King in His beauty. Ears, eyes, hearts, were filled with the Christ of God. Hearts that take in His great redeeming love cannot but respond with an answering love. And so they go to their homes of peace and comfort, filled with the blessing of God, only caring to live that they may love Him, and serve Him, and honour Him as the one object of that eternal life which, by His grace, flows in their veins. And as the centuries roll on, knowledge of Him, their blessed King, His gracious rule, His tender care, His boundless wisdom, His delight in finding for them resources of joy of infinite variety, only makes the love grow deeper, stronger, until

the ties that bind the Redeemer and the redeemed together are woven into inseparable bonds. The Psalms are known by heart, and are heard through the whole earth; sweet singing in the homes, in the streets, in the fields and workshops, is the spontaneous outpouring of hearts happy in the love of Jesus.

As the liberated Satan once more begins to go to and fro in the earth, he soon discerns that it is a transformed world, filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Very quickly also he will discover that there are gloomy souls who do not join in the general happy songs of praise; morose, unrestful, unhappy spirits, that he knows will have an affinity to himself. He can recognise his own old lie, that long ago instilled into Eve's heart distrust of God, is still living in these hearts of her descendants. He can find in them a response which tells him they are his; and although kept down by the rod of iron, yet the leaven of evil is working in them still. He searches the whole earth, and becomes conscious that there lies beneath a fair exterior of decent manners and subjection to law, a widely-extended and deep-seated discontent. There is submission, but only through fear of punishment; and the rule of righteousness is hated in their inmost hearts. Their life is a lie of false subjection (Ps. lxvi. 3). Disaffected hearts are growing more restive; kindness is misinterpreted, patient grace is despised as of old; and bitter animosity

is only cloaked under a thin veil of policy. How soon Satan can fan this discontent and disaffection into an open rebellion!

DECEIVING THE NATIONS.

Cogent and suited to the times come the suggestions of Satan, "Why continue under this thraldom indefinitely? Why not make an effort to cast off the yoke?" To the evil thoughts already rankling, the arch-deceiver brings the temptation, and soon it begins to work. Strange expressions are heard here and there, first with surprise, soon with alarm. Rumour, silent for a millennium, finds its tongue once more; wishes for a change are bandied about, and complaints against the Government are becoming frequent and in some unexpected quarters.

SEDITION.

In secret conclaves conspiracy begins, is fostered, and rapidly grows. Organisation soon follows; and it becomes known in the earth that men are once more talking about war. War has been unknown since the King came from heaven a thousand years ago, and made wars to cease to the end of the earth (Ps. xlvi. 9).

OPEN REBELLION.

Mustering, training, and arming of men begin, but it is noticed that no preparations are being made on the part of the King of kings to meet the growing insurrection. Leaders of revolt now become known, and their followers cease to hide their hatred of the King, and openly declare

themselves. Once again, and for the last time, the world takes sides; the King's word passes swiftly through the earth, "He that is not with Me is against Me" (Matt. xii. 30). It is the final issue.

"For Jesus or for Satan."

The revolution takes definite form; the armies of the insurgents are to concentrate, and lay siege to Jerusalem. It has no visible defences, the entrances are open night and day; there is no artillery: it will fall an easy prey, and the reign of sin and Satan shall soon be restored. The contagion spreads; adherents to the new cause increase rapidly.

Notwithstanding the vast extent of the rebellion in the far regions of the earth, the peace of Jerusalem is undisturbed.

The worship and public rejoicings are unbroken. But loyal subjects are flocking in from distant parts, seeking protection in the city of the great King.

Jerusalem becomes crowded with refugees, and a vast camp is improvised outside the city walls. It is the camp of the saints (Rev. xx. 9). Still the King makes no counter-move, not even to order the city gates to be shut at night. For unless the Lord keep it, the watchmen wake but in vain. His keeping power is greater than walls and towers. Confident in their beloved Lord, the King keeps the hearts of His loyal people in perfect peace.

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good: He knows all that Satan is working in men.

At length the approaching armies, with their banners and siege-trains, can be seen from the heights of Mount Zion. Army after army arrives, and each takes up its appointed position with a precision that evidences the organising power of a master mind.

There are proud standards of nations and kingdoms that will not have Christ to reign over them (Isa. lx. 12). More conspicuous than all are those of two ancient powers, Gog and Magog, and with them a number as the sand of the sea.

And now the vast combination of confederates of Satan have taken their stand; they have encompassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city. Will the King call for legions of heavenly powers to meet the powers of rebellious men?

DESTRUCTION OF REBELS.

Well He knows when Satan's last battalion has taken its ground. He looks on the assembled hosts; in them are concentrated all the evil that lingers in the human race! There is Satan's harvest of the earth reaped, and gathered to His very feet. Satan and all that are Satan's are there,—he whose rebellion has survived a thousand years' imprisonment, and all the hearts that choose Satan rather than the Son of God, after all the resources of grace have been lavished in vain. This is thy finished work, Satan. One

look over the assembled insurgent hosts, in all their Satanic pomp and pride, and one look to His Father, and fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them.

For a second time He hath comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, taken hold of the ends of it, and shaken the wicked out of it (Isa. xl. 12; Job xxxviii. 13). Angels from heaven executed His will once, and gathered out of His kingdom all offenders and workers of iniquity. But this time Satan himself is permitted to gather all his followers to their destruction. Boundless are the resources of the King of kings.

SATAN'S FINAL DOOM.

"The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone . . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Not for another thousand years of trial, whether he would yet repent, but for a final and irrevocable doom.

THE BEAST AND FALSE PROPHET AGAIN.

(Rev. xx. 10).

Here is one of those openings of the veil of the unseen world, sometimes given in the Word of God, which so startle and strike the soul. When revealing the casting of Satan into the lake of fire, the case of the two men is brought into recollection, who were cast there alive when the King descended in glory a thousand years before (Rev. xix. 20). The Revised Version restores one word ("they") omitted from our Authorised

Translation. "The devil . . . was cast into the lake of fire . . . where are the Beast and the False Prophet, and *they* shall be tormented . . . for ever and ever." "They" must include the devil, the beast, and the false prophet, for they are the only persons named. This reveals to us that after these men shall have been there for a thousand years, their doom is pronounced—a perpetuation of their torment for ever.

With Satan cast into the lake of fire, an end is put at last to the active power of evil. All the rebellious creatures whose hearts were alienated from God, were discovered by Satan, lured to their doom, and are now numbered with the dead. None of the human race survives, except the loyal and loving subjects of the King.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

There remains one more great act of judgment which has been committed to the Son of God (John v. 22). "For He is Judge of quick and dead" (Acts x. 42). The living nations were judged when He first descended from heaven in power and glory, attended by all His saints (Matt. xxv. 31, etc.). A thousand years have rolled away since then, and the Judge once more ascends the judgment throne to judge the dead who have died in sin. All the dead are included who have died since the beginning of time, until the last death-stroke fell on the great rebellious multitude at the end of the thousand years' reign, who were slain by the fire from heaven.

As the Sovereign Judge takes His seat on the great white throne, the earth, where all human sin was wrought, flees away, and the heaven above, where Satan's first sins began, is fled away also, and there is found no place for them. This describes the complete destruction of heaven and earth ; wheresoever sin has been.

So sin is taken away by the Lamb of God (John i. 29). By His atoning sacrifice sin is taken away from the believer, and by personal judgment sin is taken away in the unbeliever (himself and his sins together), into the place prepared for the devil and his angels.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE (Rev. xx. 11).

This is the great final session of judgment of the dead. Ver. 12 : "I saw the *dead* small and great stand before God, and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life ; and the *dead* were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works ; and the sea gave up the *dead* which were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the *dead* which were in them : and they were judged every man according to their works" (Rev. xx. 13). Four times over it is reiterated that it is the *dead* who are to be judged at this great white throne ; and this agrees with the word in Heb. ix. 27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

THE JUDGMENT OF THE DEAD.

We read before of the dread coming of the

Son of Man, accompanied by all His saints and angels, to execute judgment on the ungodly living on earth. This will fulfil the original prophecy of Enoch (Jude 14), and the more detailed descriptions of the same event in Joel iii. and Matt. xxv. 31, etc. It is the event called the judgment of the Quick, or the Living, and takes place at the commencement of His millennial reign.

This judgment of the great white throne is at the end of the Millennium, and is the judgment of the *dead* that have died in their sins. The death they died did not separate them from their sins, for at this judgment after their first death, they are judged according to their works, as it is written: "After death the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). It is, moreover, according to the repeated word foretelling the resurrection of the dead (Heb. vi. 2); that is, all the dead that are then in their graves.

This final resurrection is described in Dan. xii. 2, as the awakening from sleep in the dust of the earth, to shame and everlasting contempt. The Lord Jesus calls it the resurrection of judgment (John v. 29, R.V.), and Paul speaks of it as the resurrection of the unjust (Acts xxiv. 15). At this awful period the dead bodies will be raised from the grave, and the departed spirits recalled from Hades (see Luke xvi. 23), and reunited to stand at the judgment bar of God, where presides the Son, to whom all judgment is com-

mitted (John v. 22); and the time is described as the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Pet. iii. 7), and the judgment of the Great Day (Jude 6). The last-named passage tells that not only will the lost of the human race be judged at this final and dread tribunal, but fallen angels also.

THE BOOKS OF RECORD OF SIN.

Terrible is the detail of the opening of the books out of which the dead are judged—the unanswerable record of every sinful word and deed. Thoughts are included (Rom. ii. 15, 16); words (Matt. xii. 36); and deeds (Rev. xx. 12, 13). Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life is cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev. xx. 14, 15). From the two great judgments—that is, the judgment of the living (Matt. xxv. 41), and this final judgment of the dead (Rev. xx. 15)—the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be the presiding Judge of both (John v. 22, 27; 2 Tim. iv. 1), has already given His

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to every one who has heard His Word and believed Him that sent Him, in these wondrous terms: He hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life (John v. 24, R.V.). And we do already wait for the coming of God's Son from heaven. . . Even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. i. 10).

The world is running on its course, hastening to its end according to the Scriptures.

This world's history, written long ages beforehand, is being carried out to the letter, and with such exactness of detail, that the Bible student can easily discern the age in which he is living, and he knows that the earth is rolling onward to its final destruction, precisely as the Scriptures foretell. The heavens and the earth which are now . . . are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up; the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved (2 Pet. iii, 7, 10, 12).

The human race, created in Adam, fell away from God to Satan by Adam's first sin, and is claimed by Satan in joint ruin. We can trace through Bible history and prophecy a succession of ages or dispensations in which God has dealt with man under special conditions. Each dispensation has its special character, a corresponding special dealing on God's part, and each one has ended in a disastrous conclusion.

We thus learn that mankind as a race is not recovering, nor rising to better things, but has, without any exception, been sinking lower and lower since the first fall.

A very brief review of these successive ages will demonstrate this.

1. Adam, created in perfection and happiness, (Gen. i. 31) disobeyed God and fell to Satan.

All his race and those under his dominion fell with him (Rom. v. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 22).

2. Man left to himself with a conscience of good and evil does not return to God, but strays further away. Man became so intolerably corrupt that God found it necessary to sweep away the whole race in the Flood, except eight persons, who were saved in the ark.

3. God next called out Abraham, and separated his descendants from the rest of the world, which was already sinking into idolatry. He made them a peculiar people for His own possession, a chosen nation; gave them perfect laws, and personally ruled over them. But they deliberately chose to follow the idolatry of the heathen, rather than remain loyal to God; and they were ultimately cast off, and scattered among all nations.

4. God again tested men by sending His beloved Son to guide them, heal them, deliver them from Satan's oppression; and the world's choice was "Not this Man, but Barabbas," and Jew and Gentile conspired against Him, and crucified Him.

5. Yet again the race is tested, under the personal presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit, offering free pardon for all offences, on the ground of the accomplished atonement obtained by the death of Christ in the sinner's stead. The world scorns the proclamation of mercy, despises the Atonement and the Redeemer, and will make its final choice of the worship of Satan.

6. The last and final test is yet again under

new conditions. All influence from Satan is prevented by his imprisonment for a thousand years. Christ reigns in power and visible presence on the earth. Righteousness, peace and prosperity are carried to perfection, and after His personal presence and influence has blest the earth for a thousand years, even then the world turns with open arms to Satan as soon as he is loosed from his prison; and the reign of Christ on this earth closes in widespread rebellion and destruction of the rebels; and the earth, the scene of man's sin, together with the heavenly places where Satan first schemed against God, are utterly destroyed. There is a proof, repeated under each successive trial, that man's heart, once alienated from God, will never return, and will only gravitate from bad to worse. But God does not leave Satan to triumph, nor leave His creatures to their fate, nor allow His purpose to be frustrated. By His love He provides an atonement through the death of His Son, and He has a resource in re-creation, which He accomplishes in every heart that hears and receives His Word. And so men have been saved by faith in Him, out of every successive age of declension, in ever-increasing multitudes. The world is not saved, but those are saved out of it who turn back in faith to God. The world is lost through Eve believing Satan; her race follows her choice. Her descendants are saved so far as each one renounces the liar, and believes the God of Truth.

CHAPTER XII

THE NEW CREATION.

HILE men are boasting of "The Ascent of Man," we find that God has written, in the Book which will survive the destruction of the earth itself, the history of the Fall of Man: his fall from the perfection of his first creation, and his subsequent descent to deeper depths of sin, ruin, and misery. "By one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). And in all the ages that have run their long course since then, sin has reigned to death, and will still reign, until death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed (Rom. v. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 26; Rev. xx. 14). We look for no recovery within the range of Adam's race, save only through "the Second Man, the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. xv. 47). His name is Saviour, for He is the Salvation of God: "And there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). This great and only salvation is not a renovation, but a new creation.

In Christ a New Creation (2 Cor. v. 17).

This is no uplifting from crudity to refinement;

no evolving of ultimate good out of a chaos of evil; no development of latent goodness still dormant in man's nature. All these are the imaginations of men's hearts, by which they contradict the Word of God.

"A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven" (John iii. 27). He must have a new life from God; he must be born anew.

The new-born soul, created anew in Christ, already belongs to the new creation. Faith and hope rest in the glorious words, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. v. 17). The believer is even now established in that grand comprehensive reconciliation in which all things are to be reconciled, whether in earth or in heaven (Col. i. 20).

God's dealings with the fallen and falling race are uniformly in judgment, although He delivers souls out of it by His grace.

Cain is cursed, and made a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, marked for final judgment in the Record Book, as "of that wicked one" (1 John iii. 12). The whole world, following the course of sin, is swept away in the Flood, but eight souls are saved through it. The cities of the plain, when their wickedness reaches a full measure, are destroyed by fire, but three souls are saved out of Sodom.

The land of Canaan is borne with for centuries.

until their limit of longsuffering is reached, and then the whole population are given over to the sword of judgment. Jericho, the first city visited, is destroyed, but Rahab and her relations are saved, and her name is honoured as a mother in Israel. It will be no new thing when God lets fall His judgments on the whole earth, according to the forewarnings given in His Word; but, as was done before, a saved people will be taken up out of the earth before the days of wrath begin to break.

God's grace has always wrought in separating vessels of mercy out of the way of impending judgments, and never to a greater extent than now; but though the prophecy may seem long yet it lingers not and slumbers not: the day of judgment will break at the appointed time (2 Pet. ii. 3). And when the last thousand years have been fulfilled, all the dead that have died in their sins will receive their final judgment in its sentence and execution from the Judge seated on the great white throne (John v. 22, 27; xii. 48; Rev. xx. 12, 13, 15).

And here again, as in all former scenes, mercy rejoiceth against judgment, and all who put their trust in God and in His Christ, will have long since been in the enjoyment of the inheritance of saints in light.

Three Diverse Scenes of Judgment.

Let us take a brief summary view of the diverse scenes of judgment. First there is a judgment

of works for the awarding of prizes. It is to be held in the great Audience Chamber of Heaven, before the judgment-seat of Christ. Even if works are burned up, all the workers are saved (1 Cor. iii. 15), for all of human race who ever enter heaven are, by faith, under the atoning blood of Christ.

Next comes the judgment of the quick, or living. This is to be held on earth, when the Lord comes in His glory (Matt. xxv. 31), accompanied by all His holy angels, and also by all His saints (Zech. xiv. 5). This judgment will be one of the earliest events when the Lord Jesus comes to the earth. It will result in a division of the then living human race; some saved for the earthly kingdom, some consigned to everlasting fire; purging out of His kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity (Matt. xxv. 34, 41; xiii. 41).

Lastly, after the thousand years comes the great judgment of all the dead (Rev. xx. 11).

This judgment is held before the Judge seated on the great white throne; neither in heaven nor on earth, for both have fled away. All who stand there have been raised from their first death for judgment, and are sentenced to the second death.

From these two last-mentioned judgments—that is, the judgment of the living and of the dead—He who is the appointed "Judge of quick and dead" (Acts x. 42) has assured the believer that he is certainly delivered. These two are the

judgments at which "the wrath of God will be manifested against all unrighteousness of men" (Rom. i. 18), and Jesus delivereth us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. i. 10, R.V.).

Judgment Clears the Way for a New Creation.

This will be God's final dealing with sin and sinners, root and branch, including Satan, fallen angels, wicked spirits, sinful men, involving all that remains of sinful life in one great and last judgment stroke. It will fix an eternal separation between good and evil. "Thenceforth he that is unjust will be unjust still, and he that is holy will be holy still" (Rev. xxii. 11). Satan, the author of sin, and all who have chosen to follow him in sin, abide in the place of sin and its consequences; and all that have let God and His grace take possession of them are found with Him and His Christ.

Every fierce storm that sweeps over the earth and sea teaches us a lesson of the world to come.

The dark clouds obscuring the sun, the wind furious and destructive, the rain in torrents, the sea raging and terrific, sweeping floods, lightning carrying death and terror, thunder shaking earth and heaven; these leave in their wake catastrophe and ruin. But soon the storm abates and passes away. The clouds disperse, and calm succeeds the storm. The sun shines out with clearness, and unusual beauty covers all the scene. Everything looks up refreshed; the very air is cleansed,

and its purity and sweetness impart a new spring of health to all things that have life.

So will be the effects of the judgments of God. The judgment of works will clear away out of mind every thought, word, and deed unworthy of children of God, and so clear the heavenly places.

The judgment of the living—the great storm of the earth—will clear the earthly kingdom of all that is adverse to the King, and His Will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The judgment of the Great White Throne, the great storm of universal judgment, clears the creation of God of all sin and sinners, angelic and human.

So will the universe be purged by fire and prepared for a new creation, which sin shall never stain.

Earth and Heaven Shaken.

God has foretold, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. xii. 26, 27).

Heaven and earth, and the kingdom therein, will be shaken and removed, because these were the spheres stained by sin of angels and men. The sinners are judged, and the places where sin reigned are destroyed. Nothing remains in the enjoyment of life, so far as we are informed, but unfallen heavenly beings, and the redeemed of human race, the re-created children, born of God.

For these will God create new heavens and a new earth, and in this new creation is to be established the "Kingdom which cannot be moved" (Heb. xii. 28).

In Genesis we read how in the beginning God created the heavens and earth (Gen. i. 1), and, last of all His works, created man in His own image.

This order is reversed in the new creation, for the new man in Christ is, after God, created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. iv. 24), and long afterwards the new heavens and new earth will be created for the new man to dwell in.

New Heavens and a New Earth.

There are four great scriptures which definitely foretell the new heavens and new earth (Isa. lxv. 17, 18; Isa. lxvi. 22; 2 Pet. iii. 13; and Rev. xxi. 1 to xxii. 5). In these we learn that God will create these glorious spheres; and, according to the first three, the new heavens are named in the plural; in all of them the earth is in the singular.

In the last passage is the description according to the vision given to John, and names a new heaven and a new earth, so that the further reaches of new-created heavens lay beyond his view, and are as yet undescribed.

Be Glad and Rejoice.

Before these new realms are created, the first heaven and first earth will have passed away (Rev. xx. 11; xxi. 1), and shall eventually be forgotten out of mind (Isa. lxv. 17).

So glorious is the prospect that, from the first announcement of the promise, God calls for rejoicing. It is to be a scene of gladness and joy, in which God will rejoice in His people, and they will rejoice in God and in each other (Isa. lxv. 18).

Israel's portion is specially named as the seed that God hath blessed with a blessing that shall remain (Isa. lxvi. 22), but the promise extends to all "them that have obtained like precious faith" with the Apostles through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. iii. 13 and 2 Pet. i. 1); and here is the characteristic of the scene of joy, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." In it shall be seen the glory and beauty of the City of God, the new and holy Jerusalem —"the City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb. xi. 10).

So full of joy is the promise, that we are to anticipate it now with great delight. We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. May these words find a true response in our hearts, the more so as the time draws on!

Former Things Forgotten.

The former things are passed away, and shall not be remembered nor come into mind. All the great interests at stake in the world, personal or national, all the great concerns of life-and-death importance, are shown in their true light, fleeting and vanishing away. What affections are centred in things that are already tending inevitably to

dust and ashes! What desires men have to perpetuate the memories of those that have passed away! Names are engraven in granite rock, but even the granite will melt with fervent heat, and the names will be remembered no more. But are not names still living in deathless fame in works of art and poetry, learning and invention? Even these are but "former things," soon to be forgotten, and never will cross a mind again. So will the kingdom of Satan, his power in the air, the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them—all shall be forgotten. No sound of their existence will pass the confines of the world of darkness and despair. Blotted out of the kingdom of God and its realms of light, neither to be known nor remembered. Here in the new heavens and earth are the works that remain; here are the living, that live to praise God; and the memories of those living ones will be perpetual memorial tablets of His great goodness (Ps. cxlv. 7). Here in the new creation God will dwell with men. "They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. xxi. 3).

We are not to think that what we learn in this present life, concerning God and His Christ, is ever to be forgotten; but quite the reverse. In the Everlasting Kingdom, throughout all generations in still remote ages of the new creation, they shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and sing of Thy Righteousness (Ps. cxlv. 7, etc.). The Throne of God

and of *The Lamb* will be a perpetual memorial of Calvary, on which great sacrificial work the New Creation itself is founded. All that we now learn of the Holy Spirit concerning Him of whom He testifies, will surely be remembered unto all the generations of the Age of the Ages (Eph. iii. 21).

AGAIN REJOICE.

At the first mention of the new heavens and new earth (Isa. lxv. 17, 18) we were told to be glad and rejoice for ever in that which God creates. Weeping *may* endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (Psa. xxx. 5). Sorrow may come, by the way, during a little while, but joy is assured for ever. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. vi. 10), rings out the same glad note. That which shall abide is joy, in the eternal sunshine of the love of God. A few passing clouds of sorrow may flit across our sky, but "the morning cometh" (Isa. xxi. 12), and it is a morning without clouds (2 Sam. xxiii. 4). Soon, and for ever, sorrow and tears will have passed away (Rev. xxi. 4). For God has said, "Behold,

I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW"

(Rev. xxi. 5). Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God (2 Cor. v. 17). As the cloudless morning brightens, new joys will blot out the remembrance of former sorrows; or the memories of sadness passed away will be so interwoven with memories of the love of Christ as to blend them in chords

of gladness (Ps. xxx. 11, 12); and every heart will overflow with love, and joy, and praise.

NEW JERUSALEM.

In the midst of all things made new and glad we read of a new Jerusalem, created to be a rejoicing, and her people a joy. Not only joyful, but also a joy to others.

The New Jerusalem is the crowning glory of the New Creation, glorifying her Creator and radiating His glory: at once the dwelling-place of God; the joy of His Christ; the Seat of His Government; the Place of His Sanctuary.

The more we contemplate this scene, the more our souls will flow along with the words of the Spirit, and "look for" new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. iii. 13).

Do we look for His coming, the day we shall be gathered together unto Him and meet Him in the air? What joy can with this compare? The actual realisation at last of the blessed hope (Titus ii. 13). It will be the great day of the Bridegroom's joy in the meeting with His Bride; when His joy shall be in her, and her joy be full (John xv. 11). There is yet an exceeding joy in the presentation of His saved ones, without blemish, like Himself, before the presence of the Father's glory (Jude 24). But even then all things are not yet reconciled. Joy will have still a wider range in the thousand years of this world's Sabbath; but it will be shaded with some of that which grieves the heart of God. We must look on fur-

ther still, beyond the thousand years, into the new heavens and new earth, and anticipate the scene where God's loving heart and holy nature can rest in peace, without reserve, in all things made new, and all things of God.

Then will redeemed creation be blest in the exceeding richness of His grace : all shall be blest in Him, and all creatures shall bless Him with their hearts and lives ; it will be their joy to live to worship, and to serve Him.

We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Does not this give fresh zest to the prayer of child-like love,

"THY KINGDOM COME"?

Many have said these words, and millions more will do so yet ; but no hearts can desire, nor lips utter, with fuller, deeper, wider, richer meaning, than those that are taught to say "Abba, Father" by the Spirit of adoption, who leads them to worship Him in spirit and in truth, and to pray, in joyful anticipation, "Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come ; Thy will be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven."

And though the Spirit, who searches all things, makes us know this prayer cannot be fully answered till heaven and earth that are now are passed away, this does not depress the prayer, but faith and hope rise all the stronger in the glad certainty the day will surely come and will not tarry.

THE NEW AND HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

Rev. xxi. 2; Heb. xii. 22. The joys and glories of the new heavens are but little described in the prophetic Scriptures, but abundant and wonderful are the promised blessings and glories of the new earth.

The earth will be blest in the descent of the New Jerusalem; but it comes down from God out of heaven (Rev. xxi. 2).

If earth is blessed with this priceless gift, what shall be said of the heavens out of which it comes—the home of the Builder and Maker of the City of God?

Peter's view of the new creation is not the outlook of a Jew, but of an apostle of Christ, given to the Church of God (Eph. iv. 11, 12). He is inspired to say that Jesus is the Living Stone to whom all others are built. They are, moreover, living stones, and form this glorious spiritual house. This Church of God will first be seen in her completeness, and in her position of peculiar blessing and excellence, at the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7).

The Church, as it is now, is described as one body in Christ (Eph. i. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xii.), having many members, and Christ its one Head. This teaches its unity, although the members are so many: an absolute and living union exists between the Head and all the members, the Holy Ghost, as the One Spirit, being the uniting bond whose presence in each makes all one.

The Church is also described as an holy temple in the Lord (Eph. ii. 21). This view sets her forth as a habitation of God, a sanctuary for His worship, where God dwells in the midst of living souls and worshipping hearts. It shows she has a constitution dependent on Christ, based on the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and growing by additions of new-born souls added to the Lord; added to the apostles, and to all that have been built up together before. The great characteristic of the Habitation is Holiness (Ezek. xliii. 12).

Yet again the Church is described as the Bride: the one relationship in which love is the essential characteristic. All these descriptions set forth the Church as she really is, even now (John iii. 29; xv. 9-16).

But there are revelations yet in reserve—a manifestation in heaven as the Lamb's Wife (Rev. xix. 7) in glorified union with Christ; and she will be so displayed and acknowledged. For this revelation all creation is now waiting (Rom. viii. 19).

And still another manifestation is reserved for the New Creation under the description of the heavenly city descending from God out of heaven, and established in the new earth. So will be revealed the heavenly glory of the Church in union with Christ in the sight of men on earth, for their blessing and God's glory.

The Church can readily be identified under these five descriptions, thus: Eph. i. 22, 23, names

the Church as the Body of Christ; Eph. ii. 22, as the Habitation of God; Eph. v. 31, 32, as the Wife, the great mystery; Rev. xxi. 9, 10, connects with these, and shows that the Bride, the Wife, and the Holy Jerusalem are one and the same.

THE PLACE OF WORSHIP.

The glad and worshipful hearts of the inhabitants of the new earth will seek their God and His Christ, to lay at His feet their tribute of worship and praise. The Tribes of Israel will lead the world in this, and the ever-open gates of the Holy Jerusalem, proclaiming freedom of access to God, will be the highways along which will pour in the thank-offerings of a glad and grateful race. The names of the Tribes inscribed on the gates show that the children have found the city their father Abraham looked for (Heb. xi. 10) and have full right of entry into it. The angel-porters also show that it is a heavenly city open for earthly visitors, who are free to come and go; free to come in and worship, and get their blessing-stores replenished out of the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord (Ps. cxxii. 4).

And what of the city itself: its wall and twelve foundations, in which are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb? Do we need more than to read Ephesians ii. to be sure that here is the interpretation of the symbol of the city? In Christ is the reconciliation—Jew and Gentile one in

Christ begins it, and this is the beginning of the Church of God. Peace made in one body by the cross is now preached to those afar off, and to them that were nigh. Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. In this blessing of the Trinity, we, who once were strangers and foreigners, aliens and enemies, are reconciled and made fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone. All the blessing Israel shall ever know will come to them through that very Stone their builders rejected, but on whom God has now built His Church.

Here, then, is laid the corner-stone; here are the foundations, and here the builded wall; all are living stones, chosen and precious. And so believers in Jesus are come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; built in, member by member, "fitly framed together" (Eph. ii. 21). And after her establishment in the heavens at the translation to glory, the same Church will in due time be brought by its Lord and Head into the new earth, to be in the midst of it, the seat of His gentle and beneficent rule, the sanctuary for His worship, the store-chamber of His blessings for the earth, the radiating medium through which His light and His glory shall fill the earth with peace and gladness, life and light and health.

WALLS OF SALVATION AND GATES OF PRAISE.

When the multitudes of the blessed people of the new earth seek their God, they will find Him in the New Jerusalem, and see Him in the person of Jesus. We have read of the Greeks that once came to the humble disciple and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus": he told a fellow-disciple, and together they reported their visitors to the Master. The Lord Jesus could look along the coming ages, and see what His Spirit now shows us in His Word—a people from the remotest bounds of the new earth coming to those who live ever in His presence, evermore with Him (1 Thess. iv. 17), and saying, "We, too, would see Jesus"; and the saints of the household of God will conduct them into the presence of the King, aid them in presenting their offerings, teach them more than they know of His worth and His glories, load them with His benefits, and send them forth again with hearts enlarged, and filled with a knowledge of a Divine home, Divine family, love and joy; and, with a message of multiplying grace, mercy, and peace, they will go back to bless their own happy homes and children with the blessing of God; and thus the knowledge of His grace and His glory shall fill the New Creation.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES.

ET everything that hath breath praise the Lord." This last verse of the last Psalm is more than a prophecy. It is the word of Him who said, "Let there be light," who speaks, and it is done (Ps. xxxiii. 9).

When God deals with material things, there is nothing to resist His Word, and it is obeyed immediately. Sin and a perverted will withstand His will; then in mercy He gives time for repentance, before He makes His power felt. He has said long since, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord!" and still there are many lives that do not praise Him. Nevertheless, the Word is spoken, and it shall be fulfilled.

Many wrongs go unredressed in this age of grace in which we live, for God bears with sinners, and waits to be gracious (Is. xxx. 18). In the age to come, when Jesus reigns in Mount Zion, He will execute righteousness and judgment for *all* that are oppressed (Ps. ciii. 6). He will break in pieces the oppressor (Ps. lxxii. 4). But in another age

that lies beyond again, all in heaven and earth shall be gathered in one in Christ, and then all forms of oppression will have ceased to be.

Amid the bright sunshine of the Millennial reign many shadows are cast across the scene. Sinners are there, yielding but a feigned obedience; some hearts are unreconciled to God; there are some who do not live to praise Him.

In the lovely description of the healing waters flowing from the house of God (Ezek. xlvii.), swelling in volume, as they flow, to the fulness of a river, carrying health and fruitfulness where they reach, vivifying even the Dead Sea, we read in verse 11: "The miry places [bordering that sea] and the marshes shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt."

The blessing is great, but not complete, because sin still lingers in human hearts, and, like the memory of Lot's wife, the warning of the cities of the plain cannot be wholly withdrawn. The rebellious thoughts which grow out of feigned obedience will come of "looking back" to the reign of sin. This latent presence of sin fully accounts for all the incompleteness of blessing in the Millennial age.

The harmony that will exist in the animal creation is limited to the Holy Mountain of

the Lord (Isa. xi. 9, and lxv. 25). This shows the blessing that might have been universal, if sin had been wholly gone; and "dust shall be the serpent's meat" retains the curse of Satan in the earth, until he falls into the Lake of Fire.

In the Millennial age earthly saints will be so fully yielded in loyalty of heart to their beloved King that their whole life, domestic affairs, and even their recreations, will be holiness unto the Lord. For the household vessels, and the bells on their horses, are all sanctified to God as fully as the vessels of the Sanctuary (Zech. xiv. 20, 21). Yet the Canaanite, excluded from the house of the Lord, marks the presence of aliens from God, unreconciled, not gathered in one in Christ.

Thank God for the prophecies of another and a perfect scene, in which all in heaven and all in earth will be gathered together in one in Christ (Eph. i. 10), and all shall be reconciled to God (Col. i. 20).

The Rod of Iron, judgment of evildoers, curse on sinners dying in their sins, feigned obedience, rebellion, and the last footprints of Satan, and every other shadow across a prophetic scene, shows it is Millennial; and every perfect scene pertains to the new creation, and the final age of universal blessing.

We who trust in Christ are even now re-

conciled in the body of His flesh through death (Col. i. 21). Already we have obtained an inheritance in Christ; already we are of the new creation in Him, and we look forward in full assurance of hope to the fulness of the new creation yet to be revealed, in the heavenly and earthly spheres, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, according to Eph. i. 10.

The word "times" in this passage is often used, and always stands for limited points, or periods of time, contradistinguished from eternity; and thus the very expression, "dispensation of fulness of times," distinctly indicates a new period of God's dealings with men, characterised by fulness of blessing, which is to run its appointed course in the newly-created earth, before earthly saints will reach their eternal state.

The heavenly saints will enter their eternal condition and blessing when they meet the Lord in the air, and are presented to the Father, and, in union with their blessed Lord, will participate in all the interests of the earthly saints, and witness with delight the developments of their destinies.

We have now before us two successive ages yet to come—the Millennial age of the kingdom of the Son in this earth; and then, to follow, the new age in the new creation.

During the thousand years of the first, the

King, reigning in righteousness, will judge all sin as it occurs, uphold the good, and repress the wrong, and, at the close, will finally put down all evil and all powers and beings hostile to God; and the heavens and earth which are now will be destroyed.

Then will come the glorious new heavens and new earth, and the next dispensation of the fulness of times will run its course. A lovely scene of perfect holiness, righteousness, and peace, governed by love, and characterised by unbroken joy and gladness. All in heaven and earth will then be reconciled to God, and God's love revealed in Christ will have so enthralled the hearts of all intelligent beings that all in heaven and earth will be gathered together in one in Christ. In this scene Satan can never enter, and sin can never be. All things will be established in perfection, according to the eternal counsels of the blessed God. In both these ages to come, God will display to the wonder and delight of heaven and earth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us through Christ Jesus (Eph. ii. 7).

THE KINGDOM OF THE FATHER.

When all enemies are subdued and put under the feet of Jesus, and death, the last enemy, is destroyed, then cometh the end (1 Cor. xv. 23-28). This is clearly not the end of His kingdom, for that has no end (Luke

i. 33), but the end will have come to all power adverse to God—the end of all dealing with sin and death; and then the Son delivers up the kingdom which He has wholly subdued, as an offering of Son-like devotion, unto the Father, that God may be all in all.

The Son has ever wrought for the Father's glory, and will do so unto the end.

It is Jesus, the Son of God, who tells us of the kingdom of the Father, and it is His own glorious work to establish it. Although so delivered up, and designated His Father's kingdom, it will, none the less, be a joint dominion, and the word of the Spirit in the two last references to the throne in the Book of God, describes it as the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. xxii. 1, 3).

It is to this glorious age and kingdom the Lord directs our prayer:

"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." And again in His last words, instituting His holy memorial supper, He promised to drink with us the new wine in His Father's kingdom.

The Son then reigns on this earth for the thousand years, and that is as long as judgment needs to be exercised, for all judgment is committed unto Him (John v. 22). After subduing all things, He delivers up the

kingdom, and thenceforward, jointly with His Father, reigns in the kingdom of the new creation, and in the final age to come.

One verse (Rev. xxii. 3) determines this prolongation of the kingdom in the new creation:

"THERE SHALL BE NO MORE CURSE."

This places the scene beyond the Millennial age, and its curse on sinners dying in their sin "But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it"; so it is the kingdom still, in the new creation, and in the new Jerusalem.

Every age, or time period, must have a limit, otherwise it would be eternity. This leads us to enquire whether anything is revealed concerning the duration of the dispensation of the fulness of times, and we believe there is a clear and definite prophecy of it. When God created man He said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it." This has never been fulfilled in created perfection. The only multiplying has been in sin. Will God permit His Word to be frustrated by Satan? Surely not! We know His promise to Abraham, that in him and his seed all families of the earth shall be blessed.

Further than this, God made a covenant with Abraham that He would keep His mercy

to them that love Him, and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations (Deut. vii. 9). Since the days of David, God's people have been bidden to remember this covenant (1 Chron. xvi. 15); and in Ps. cv. 8, we are told how God remembers His covenant, whether man does so or not. Is this great thrice-recorded covenant to be regarded as a figure of speech, to be understood merely as indicating an indefinitely long time; or is it to be believed even as it is written?

We take it to be God's sure word of grace, as definite and as sure as His word of judgment, visiting iniquity unto the third and fourth generation (Ex. xxxiv. 7).

When the Lord Jesus takes the throne of David, all of Israel's race will thenceforth love, honour, and obey Him, and their children's children with them will do the same (Isa. lix. 21). Hence we know the condition of the covenant will be fulfilled, and God's mercy will be extended to a thousand generations of Abraham's descendants. Even now, while the promise is still running on, we read how His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation (Luke i. 50). It necessarily follows that while this great promise is being fulfilled in Abraham's family, all other families of the earth will

be blessed during the same period, so far as they are faithful to God.

In order to form some small idea of what is involved in this wonderful promise, let us count the generations recorded from Abraham to Christ, and compute 25 years as an average period for the unrecorded generations since the birth of Christ. Then from Abraham to Christ is 56 (Luke iii.); for the 2,000 years, or thereabouts, to the present time, reckon 80 generations, and for the Millennium 40 more. This will give a total of 176 generations from Abraham to the end of the Millennium.

If the Lord's second coming should be postponed for another century, there would even then only be about 180 generations up to the end of this world, and leave 820 generations to be fulfilled in the new earth.

There is, therefore, clear evidence that the expansion of the human race in the new earth will be vastly greater than in this present world. We are fully authorised and encouraged to consider the years of many generations (Deut. xxxii. 7), and we are thus assured that the duration of the dispensation of the fulness of times will be many thousands of years longer than all the previous dispensations put together.

Such a marvellous unfolding of God's purposes far exceeds our powers of comprehen-

sion; but His counsel standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations (Ps. xxxiii. 9-11).

So we learn that the multitudes of the blessed in the many generations to come will far outnumber the few that in these days of folly choose Satan for their god. We are appalled when we think of the extent of the ruin Satan has wrought by sin, but, terrible as it is, it shrinks almost into nothingness in comparison with the triumphs of God's grace, established through the atoning work of Christ, and expanding in the ages to come.

"Multiplying, I will multiply thee," will, indeed, be fulfilled in the millions of beings yet to be blest in Christ, sinless, deathless, perfect in spirit, soul, and body, enjoying to the full every conceivable blessing, rejoicing in the love of God, loyal and devoted to Christ; and when at last the full number of the promised generations are brought into being in the Age of ages, eternity then remains for the abiding enjoyment of the multitudes of the blest.

In the centre of the marvellous display of the accomplished purposes of God, the Church is assured of a pre-eminent heritage, as the specially appointed channel of God's glory, dispensing His blessings as they flow out to the limitless universe; and returning back

to God and to the Lamb, in the new Jerusalem, the grateful worship of all things that breathe the breath of life. Unto Him be glory in the Church by Jesus Christ, throughout all the generations of the Age of ages.

CONCLUSION.

As we follow on to know the Lord, we know His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us. We hear His voice, "Surely I come quickly." Let us prepare our hearts and say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." One word of loving welcome is for the Spirit and the Bride to say, "Come." We also say it as we live and walk in the Spirit. So let us abide in His love, the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Let us remember the promise of a crown of righteousness which awaits all them that love His appearing. Yielded to the Spirit, we shall keep His commandments, and abide in His love, and love Him because He first loved us; and just as we love Him, so shall we love His appearing.

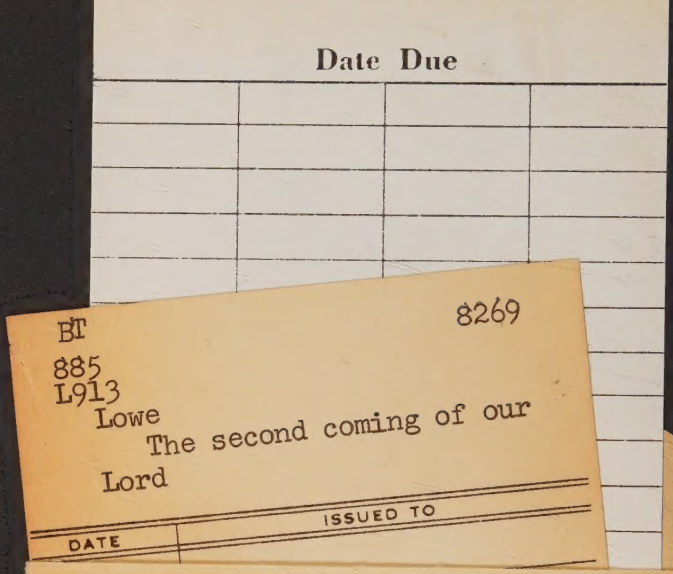
He is coming quickly; let no one take away our crown. As the bright and blessed hope of His coming grows in us, we purify ourselves even as He is pure. The purifying hope in the heart opens out into holiness and righteousness of life, and leads on to the crown of righteousness. Our immediate pros-

pect is His coming as the Bridegroom of His Church to call us to Himself in the clouds. Love, faithfulness, joyful expectation, and desire to please Him while we wait for Him should therefore characterise us now.

Another scene of glory opens on our vision in the central heavens, when in the united choir of seraphim and elders our new song of praise to the Redeemer shall lead the worship of the heavenly hosts and the universe of God.

And yet again, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, in which all living beings shall live for His pleasure, and unite to praise Him.

May we live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, given to dwell in all saints, sealing us unto the day of redemption! May we drink yet more fully of Jesus, the Fountain of the Spirit, and so learn more of His truth, and live in its power, serve the living and true God, and wait for His Son from heaven. The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ!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